The Middlebury Campus

VOL. CXXII, No. 15 | MIDDLEBURY, VERMONT, MARCH 7, 2024 | middleburycampus.com

SGA PASSES RESOLUTION TO REPLACE STARBUCKS PRODUCTS ON CAMPUS

By COLE CHAUDHARI & OLIVIA MUELLER
News Editors

KATIE FUTTERMAN / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS
Wilson Café currently serves Starbucks coffee products.

The Student Government Association (SGA) passed a resolution at the end of J-Term to replace the Starbucks products on campus with those of a local Vermont business, which is still to be determined. Dining Services intends to gather student feedback in collaboration with the SGA in order to make a decision regarding its Wilson Café coffee products.

Sponsored by SGA President Abed Abbas '24 and written by Joshua Glucksman '24.5, the resolution was unanimously passed on Jan. 22, with seven members voting in favor and two absences.

The resolution calls for the college to reevaluate its purchasing and selling of Starbucks products in favor of a more locally-sourced, ethically consistent brand — one that, according to the resolution, "does not infringe on workers' or indigenous rights."

In an email to The Campus, Abbas emphasized the importance of the college's role as an employer, and its attendant duty of providing economic opportunities for local community businesses.

"We are replacing Starbucks with a local provider that will benefit the area we live in," Abbas wrote. "Middlebury is the largest employer in the county and we have a responsibility of benefitting its citizens."

Abbas explained that the SGA is in communication with Dining Services about the process of implementing a new vendor in place of Starbucks products.

Dan Detora, director of Dining Services, expressed that he and the team are generally supportive of following student preferences when feasible.

"We sell quite a bit of Starbucks coffee, and I am not against a change if the student body as a whole is in agreement," Detora wrote in an email to the Campus.

The SGA will first need to gather student input about the proposed initiative before any permanent changes are implemented.

"I think the next step is for SGA to set up some taste testing with another coffee company and engage with the study body to make sure everyone is comfortable with the change," Detora wrote.

According to Detora's understanding, a change in coffee vendor would affect only Wilson Café's drip coffee and espresso, not the tea and pre-bottled beverages for sale in vending machines and at MiddExpress.

Abbas wrote that the SGA has contacted Middlebury-based Iluminar Coffee, which is operated by former Middlebury students, as a possible new vendor.

Middlebury alumni Grace Futral '21.5 and former Middlebury student Daniel Gutierrez roast for both Iluminar Coffee and Bud's Beans, which they acquired in 2022, out of a space in Middlebury's Historic Marble Works District.

"We are planning for a coffee tasting event as well as a marketing campaign to introduce their amazing coffee to the student

Continued on Page 2

Middlebury institutes new in-person lottery for suites, raising issues for students studying abroad

By TEJAS SRINIVASAN
Editor at Large

Middlebury Residential Life will hold in-person lotteries on campus on Friday, April 5 for suite-style housing assignments, which is a new update for the housing selection process for sophomores, juniors and seniors from the online-only assignment system used in past years.

Members of ResLife who planned the new process hope it will increase transparency and improve the overall housing selection experience, while students currently off-campus have raised concerns about not being able to attend the lottery in-person.

In a change from previous years, ResLife has opted to separate suites from the general online room selection process and conduct a lottery. According to a Feb. 14 email from Residential Life, housing selection for other suites and group housing will take place after the townhouse lottery. The traditional eight person lottery for the townhouses will now include 107 Shannon Street, and it will be open to all rising juniors and seniors.

There will be two simultaneous in-person suite lotteries, one for rising sophomores, and one for rising juniors and seniors. These lotteries will take place in Axinn 219 and 220, and there will be ResLife staff present in both a waiting room and the selection room to assist students, according to AJ Place, associate dean for Student Life.

The housing application opened to students on March 1 and will remain open until mid-

Continued on Page 2

MIDDLEBURY RECEIVES UNRESTRICTED GIFT TO THE ENDOWMENT OF $40 MILLION

By MAGGIE REYNOLDS
Editor in Chief

Middlebury has received an unrestricted donation to the endowment of $40 million from the estate of M. Brooks Michel '55. The college announced the gift in an email to faculty, staff and students on March 1, stating that Michel's donation is the largest bequest — a gift as a part of a will or trust — ever received by Middlebury and the second largest donation in the college's history.

"I am incredibly grateful for Mr. Michel's belief in the transformative power of a Middlebury education, for what this gift means for Middlebury's future, and to each of you for being part of the community that has earned this support," President Laurie Patton wrote in the email announcing the bequest.

Valued at $40 million, the gift increases the overall size of the college endowment by nearly 3%, Associate Vice President for Advancement and Campaign Operations Jami Black wrote on behalf of the college finance office in an email to The Campus. As a part of the endowment, the principal amount of the donation will be conserved and then a portion will be spent each year.

While the finance office did not define exactly how much of Michel's gift will be drawn from the endowment each year, Middlebury's endowment investment strategy states that no more than 5% of the endowment earnings will be spent in any given year. This policy is meant to ensure that Middlebury will have a permanent source of income, according to the finance office.

Michel directed his bequest to an unrestricted endowment, meaning that it is not required to be used to fund any specific department or project. Black wrote that a specific use for the donation has not yet been determined, but unrestricted dollars support the everyday student experience at Middlebury.

"An endowed unrestricted fund provides crucial budget support for all of Middlebury's immediate needs and expenses including financial aid and compensation for our faculty and staff," she added.

A member of the class of 1955, Michel believed in the power of a Middlebury education to address the challenges facing society, Patton stated in the announcement of the bequest.

Michel was a Spanish major at Middlebury and spent his sophomore and junior years studying at the Middlebury School Abroad in Madrid. Following graduation, he spent time working for the U.S. Information Agency in Panama and Venezuela, before beginning a lengthy career as a simultaneous interpreter with fluencies in English, Spanish, French and Portuguese.

Michel passed away in June 2023 at his estate in the Miami area. His family had long standing connections to Middlebury, beginning with his great-uncle Charles Andrew Munroe, who graduated in 1896. Munroe served as a trustee from 1929 through 1940 and made the construction of Munroe Hall possible by way of a $150,000 gift in 1939, according to the announcement of Michel's bequest.

Michel's gift was originally received this past fall as a part of For Every Future: The Campaign for Middlebury, the college's fundraising campaign aiming to generate $600 million by June 30,

Continued on Page 2

Middlebury returns to typical enrollment this spring, with plans to sell Inn on the Green in 2025

By SUSANNA SCHATZ
Senior News Editor

THOMAS NEVINS / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS
The Chateau is a popular housing option open to juniors and seniors.

Middlebury has returned to a more typical student enrollment number this semester following a surge in the number of students on campus in the fall and overall elevated enrollment since fall 2021. This decrease in enrollment has taken some of the strain off of on-campus housing, and the college does not anticipate housing students at the Inn on the Green next fall, as it has for the past three fall semesters.

There are currently 2,546 students enrolled at Middlebury's Vermont campus, compared to 2,800 this past fall, according to Adela Langrock, director of assessment and institutional research.

This spring's enrollment is similar to last spring, when there were approximately 2,550 students on campus. Ideal undergraduate enrollment is between 2,500 and 2,600 students, according to an email Interim Executive Vice President and Provost Michelle McCauley wrote to faculty and staff in April 2023.

The decrease in enrollment from fall to spring is the result of the larger-than-average class that graduated in February — 233 students compared to the typical 100 — and an increasing number of students who choose to study abroad in the spring semester as opposed to the fall.

There has been a surge in enrollment not only this past fall, but each fall semester over the past several years. This trend resulted from an increased number of students taking semesters off during the Covid-19 pandemic, which led to a backlog of students still on campus who were meant to have already graduated and a larger proportion of students graduating in February rather than May. The increasing popularity of studying abroad in the spring rather than the fall also exacerbated this pattern of over-enrollment in fall semesters specifically.

This fall, the college was forced to offer new, unconventional solutions to deal with having more students enrolled than on-campus housing could accommodate, including a stipend to study abroad in the fall instead of the spring, an option for first years to spend their first semester in Copenhagen, a $10,000 stipend to take a leave of absence during the fall semester and student housing at the Inn.

Continued on Page 3

NEWS

Middlebury students give input on college endowment investment

By MANDY BERGHELA

PAGE 2

LOCAL

Liv, Love, Local: Vergennes Laundry

By OLIVIA MUELLER

"Up for Discussion": A salon series at Town Hall Theater

By KATRINA SCHWARZ

PAGE 4

OPINIONS

Sarah Says: The cult of beauty

By SARAH MILLER

NFTD: It's not a coincidence we are all history majors

By MAGGIE REYNOLDS, KATIE FUTTERMAN, RYAN McELROY

PAGE 6

ARTS & CULTURE

Signed, sealed, reconsidered: "Your Sexts are Sh*t"

By VIRGINIA FRAU

2024 Oscars: Hopes and predictions for three (major) awards

By JACK TORPEY

PAGE 8

SPORTS

Spring sports previews

By SPORTS SECTION EDITORS

Women's hockey wins NESCAC Championship, advances to NCAA tournament

By JONATHAN BUCHHOLZ

PAGE 11

MIDDLEBURY STUDENTS PROVIDE INPUT ON COLLEGE ENDOWMENT INVESTMENT STRATEGY TO STUDENT LIAISON

By MANDY BERGHELA
Local Editor

The Student Government Association (SGA) wants to know how students want Middlebury College to invest its money. with a Google form asking for student input on the investment strategy of Middlebury College's endowment.

It sent a google form on Feb. 26 asking, "What input/ recommendations in regards to the Middlebury endowment investment strategy would you like to have represented through the Student Endowment Liaison (SEL) to the Investment Committee?"

The input form generated 98 student responses over the two days it was open, which both newly elected Student Endowment Liaison Jake Butler-Jancose '26 and SGA President Abed Abbas were proud of.

"We were amazed by how many responses we got," Abbas said. "We really wanted to make sure student voices are reflected and considered in how Middlebury College invests its endowment."

The purpose of the endowment is to "provide a permanent source of support for the institution's students, faculty, and programs," according to Middlebury's web page. It plays an important role in sustaining the college, the Middlebury Language Schools, Bread Loaf School of English and the Middlebury Institute of International Studies in Monterey.

It is managed by members of the Board of Trustees on the Investment Subcommittee, as well as by the college's financial and accounting staff. Members are responsible for the establishment and regular review of investment policies and strategies relevant to all endowment assets.

According to SGA by-laws, the student endowment liaison is the "official student body liaison to the Board of Trustees Investment Committee." The liaison is responsible for attending Investment Committee meetings, gathering student input for investment strategies, and reporting back to the student body a summary of what issues were brought up in meetings, according to Abbas.

The SGA voted to appoint Butler-Jancose '26 as the student endowment liaison on Feb. 23.

Butler-Jancose expressed excitement about filling in the position, which has not received much interest in the past few years, and the last person who last held it, Tyson Boynton '25.5, went abroad this spring.

"It is vital that students feel like the endowment's means and ends are not at odds." Butler-Jancose said. "As a [student endowment liaison], I am dedicated to centering student voices, Middlebury values, and Conflict Transformation in my work."

Of the 98 responses, over half of them mentioned some form of hope in ethical investing, especially ones that aligned with the values of conflict transformation.

"I want to see the complete divestment from any company that is complicit in human rights violations including and not limited to Genocide, crime against humanity, child labor, forced labor, among other things," one student responded.

Survey responses showed an overwhelming call for Middlebury investments in the endowment to reflect the conflict transformation practices that the college has committed to, and divest from any war profiteering, as laid out by the SGA's Resolution 4, Regarding Middlebury's Ethics in Investment and Consumer Partnerships Related to Indigenous Peoples, which passed in January.

One student responded: "The college espouses transformative and nonviolent conflict practices and should increase the application of conflict transformation to its finances."

Conflict Transformation at Middlebury is supported by the Center for Community Engagement, in collaboration with the Kathryn Wasserman Davis Collaborative in Conflict Transformation, and various other departments at Middlebury.

"The Collaborative in Conflict Transformation seeks to learn lessons from this vast community that can be adapted to the issues and questions that are most pressing for Middlebury," the initiative's website states. "The work we do will help build new networks and expand our ability to transform the world around us."

Another student response expressed hope that the investment strategy reflects SGA's recent efforts to pursue divestment from war profiteering entities and entities oppressing indigenous people.

"Considering that Middlebury has successfully divested from arms dealers, ending our involvement with corporations complicit in war more generally and the oppression of indigenous people in places like Palestine is feasible," they wrote.

Butler-Jancose added their belief in the importance of the concerns expressed in the student responses being brought to the Board of Trustees subcommittee meeting.

"In a time of increased polarization worldwide, it is more important than ever to focus on what unites us." Butler-Jancose said. "All of us in this college community can agree on the importance of Middlebury's mission, teaching students to live engaged, consequential, and creative lives dedicated to addressing the world's most challenging problems, and the endowment itself is dedicated to financially sustaining this mission."

The endowment is currently made up of over 1,600 individual funds, and was worth over $1.6 billion as of June 2023.

Endowment investments are kept confidential, only to be viewed by committee and finance team members and one student appointed by the SGA.

David Provost, executive vice president of finance and administration, cited competitive advantage as the reason for the lack of transparency surrounding the endowment.

"What we are trying to do is outperform the benchmarks in the market," Provost told The Campus. "If we made our investment strategy public to Williams, Amherst and all of our competitors, we wouldn't want them to understand our strategy, and they won't be showing us theirs."

Middlebury uses an outside manager to decide which particular funds to invest in.

"Since 2005, Middlebury has been contracted with Investure, along with 12 other clients who share a similar mission to Middlebury's," Provost explained. "If we went public, we would basically be enclosing the other clients', such as Dickinson and Haverford's, investment strategy too, because they are commingled funds."

Given the way the endowment is managed rather privately, Abbas expressed his belief in the importance of having student voices considered in the endowment investment strategy.

"We want to ensure student representation in Middlebury's endowment." Abbas said. "We decided to reinstate the Student Endowment Liaison position in preparation for the investment subcommittee meeting which occurred last week on [February] 28th."

Provost said that the committee itself does not choose which funds to invest in, but rather relies on Investure to make investment decisions in keeping with the SGA mission statement.

"We hold them [Investure] accountable." Provost said. "We have day-to-day communication with Investure, and have a formal review every 10 years to determine whether we continue our relationship with them. In 2025, we will be doing this review."

Middlebury institutes new in-person lottery for suites, raising issues for students studying abroad

Continued from Page 1

April, with the various lotteries and speciality housing deadlines falling in between.

Place wrote to The Campus about the new lottery system for suites, stating that it will separate out the lottery systems to allow people more opportunities to find their preferred housing.

"We've seen success in separating out other group lottery processes in the past, which allows those groups who weren't able to select something in that process to make a new plan heading into the next process. Shifting the suite/small house lotteries to be in person also eliminates having multiple groups trying to select at the same time," he wrote in an email to The Campus.

If necessary, this updated system also allows students to adjust the size of their housing group heading into the selection for singles and doubles to make finding spaces easier, according to Place.

Students studying abroad or taking time off this spring can designate a proxy to attend the lottery during their selection time, or rely on ResLife to serve as their proxy, Place explained.

The February email announcing the new system stated that further information will be sent about proxies to all students.

Students abroad who are not able to attend expressed concern about the new in-person process. Laura Wood '25, who is currently abroad in the United Kingdom, said she was worried about the feasibility of the proxy system given her and her friends' situation.

"Personally, my entire housing group is abroad right now, so we need to find someone on campus who we trust to do the process for us," Wood wrote in a message to The Campus. "The changes just add multiple levels of complexity and stress that weren't there when we were able to pick housing remotely. What is the proxy supposed to do if our housing preferences are full?"

While these changes may invoke some logistical complaints — especially from students who need to rely on student or ResLife staff proxies to handle their housing process — Place hopes that the changes create a smoother registration process overall.

"We know this is a new structure and are open to student feedback," Place added. "Ultimately our goal is to make the housing selection process as easy as we can for students."

ResLife also plans to collect feedback from students about which process — this year's suite lottery, or having all housing selection combined like years past — is easiest for them.

But Wood and Cecelia Caldwell '25, who is currently abroad in Spain, remain concerned about the new system and the additional levels of complexity it adds to what is already a stressful process.

"I'm definitely disappointed that the suite lottery has moved to an in-person format. I'd have hoped that the school would be more accommodating to students off campus for the semester, given that so many incoming seniors are abroad this semester," Caldwell wrote to The Campus. "Introducing parts of the housing process that are completely inaccessible to the majority of my group just adds an additional layer of coordination and confusion in an already tricky situation. "

Due to the way the online Starrez Student Housing Portal works, students have to search for the room they're interested in during selection to check its availability. With goals of easing the selection process in mind, ResLife plans on sharing a list of all suites, and updating availability as selections continue.

"[The list] is something we plan to share with students ahead of time, and will also be displayed in the waiting room so that students can see what is available before they select," Place wrote.

The in-person lottery system also assures that when a group is selecting, they are the only group selecting for that class year; students need not hastily select a suite out of fear that their slot will be claimed by someone else if they take too long.

"We are hoping that the in-person process decreases stress for students selecting and allows us to help students place everyone into the space they want within the suite they select," Place explained.

In addition to the changes to the lottery process, academic and special interest housing registration now has multiple deadlines. Students interested in these locations can submit applications before the initial deadline of Friday, March 8. However, those who are not able to select a suite during the eight person and suite lotteries, and are still interested in living in an academic or special interest house, will get the chance to submit applications before the final deadline of Wednesday, April 10.

Place indicated that this change was due to specialty houses struggling to fill their rosters with people committed to the house interest. Empty rooms in specialty houses are added to the selection process for singles and doubles after their rosters have been submitted, and oftentimes students who are not interested in the theme of a house end up living there because it is the best room on campus they can find still available.

"A common example we have seen happen in a few different language houses is students selecting a space within a language house even though they do not speak the specified language of the house... we hope this will help students and also help our specialty housing partners to be able to fill their rosters with students that are committed to the theme of the house," Place stated.

For those students interested in learning more about the housing options, ResLife will be holding additional informational sessions and Q&As during the remainder of the month of March.

Place stated that his and ResLife's goal is to provide housing information and support to students through the housing draw in the best way possible.

"We are happy to run processes in whichever way feels more supportive and less stressful for students," he said.

While the in-person suite lottery and other changes instituted by ResLife are part of the spring housing application process, there will still be an August draw for students who were unable to get housing in the spring. The August draw, which last year assigned housing for around 200 students, has previously faced challenges from-over enrollment and lack of sufficient housing.

A student in the class of 2024.5 spoke to The Campus about the anxieties that students can face if they are not able to get their housing settled through the process this spring.

"Living circumstances play such a vital role in our college experience... delaying this anxiety through the summer months just to face more disappointment at what options remain in August is unreasonable and unnecessary. The secondary housing lottery needs to be reassessed and, at the least, scheduled significantly earlier," the student said.

MIDDLEBURY RECEIVES UNRESTRICTED GIFT TO THE ENDOWMENT OF $40 MILLION

Continued from Page 1

2028. Falling under the Annual Giving pillar of the campaign, according to Black, the donation represents 9% of the $440 million total the college has raised thus far.

Launched at the end of October, the fundraising For Every Future campaign plans to direct the money it raises toward the financial aid program, academic programs and student life at Middlebury.

Michel's bequest is the second largest donation ever received by the college, with the largest being the one-time donation of $50 million in flexible support from Jim Davis '66 in the late 2000s. The donation went to financial aid, faculty support, athletics and unrestricted support, along with the Davis Family Library being named in his honor, Black wrote.

Dan Courcey, vice president for advancement, described estate gifts as key to the growth and evolution of Middlebury.

"Brooks Michel's extraordinary bequest demonstrates the deep connections and the powerful, lasting impact a Middlebury education has on our alumni," Courcey wrote in the gift announcement. "And, in turn, we experience every day how alumni can have a powerful, lasting impact on future generations of students."

SGA passes resolution to replace Starbucks products on campus

Continued from Page 1

body," Abbas added.

According to fellow members of the SGA, the passing of the resolution to replace Starbucks products was a collaborative and generous one, involving a variety of student perspectives and generative dialogues.

"It was a very positive process, I have been on SGA for two years and I have never seen something as pluralistic and inclusive as this was; through reason and dialogue, the Senate worked through our differences and agreed to implement an initiative that will save us money, keep our business local, and support student activism," SGA Feb Senator Shane Silverman '24.5 wrote in a message to The Campus.

Glucksman, the author of the resolution and co-president of Students for Justice in Palestine — one of the student groups advocating for Starbucks' replacement — expressed happiness about the passing of the resolution.

"I was so grateful that the legislation I wrote was passed unanimously by the SGA, but I'm also not surprised because I know that this was the right choice for the student body," Glucksman wrote in a message to The Campus.

Glucksman was a member of the group of 30 Jewish Middlebury students who wrote an op-ed in The Campus in December calling for Middlebury students, faculty and staff to boycott all Starbucks products sold on campus.

"When doing the research and thinking about asking SGA to make this switch, I felt confident and still do that the majority of students on this campus are either strongly in favor of switching to a local more ethical brand or our neutral on the issue, in the sense that they just want a diverse array of good tasting, cheap coffee on campus," Glucksman added.

Editor's note: Managing Editor Katie Futterman '24 contributed reporting to this article. Shane Silverman '24.5 is an Opinions Editor for The Campus.

Middlebury returns to typical enrollment this spring, with plans to sell the Inn on the Green in 2025

Continued from Page 1

to take a leave of absence during the fall semester and student housing at the Inn.

David Provost, executive vice president of finance and administration, spoke with The Campus about Middlebury's overall approach to managing enrollment. He noted Middlebury's accommodating approach to letting students pause their studies during the pandemic, which allowed students to take a semester or year off and then return without additional steps or consequences.

"There is no plan to grow enrollment and we are committed to returning to pre-COVID enrollment numbers," Michelle McCauley, interim executive vice president and provost, wrote in an email to The Campus.

The college anticipates enrollment higher than the 2,600 target next fall, but foresees a less extreme over-enrollment than the roughly 2,800 students on campus in the fall of 2023. Provost estimated that enrollment next fall will be about 30 to 50 students lower than it was this past fall, and predicted that the Inn on the Green will not be needed for student housing.

"We're not planning on using [the Inn] in the fall for housing, but we're not going to put it on the market for another year to make sure we're through the pandemic bubble of students," Provost said.

He added that the Inn on the Green is needed by the Town of Middlebury as lodging. The town supported the college purchasing it in 2021 with the expectation that it would be sold again once it was no longer needed for student housing. The college plans to sell the Inn following the 2024–25 academic year.

The college has remained committed to matriculating the same number of first-year students each year, even when admitting fewer new students would have relieved the strain of having larger-than-usual junior and senior classes from the pandemic-related backlog.

"We didn't want to penalize the [matriculating] classes of '21, '22 and '23, because the other thing we could have done is just taken 100 less students and denied 100 less students access to a Middlebury education," Provost stated.

Middlebury has maintained a consistent incoming class size of about 620 students matriculating each September, apart from the class of 2025.

"The Class of 2025 which was larger (~680 students) was an anomaly impacted by the global pandemic after a large group of students who were accepted for fall 2020 took a gap year and delayed their start," wrote Nicole Curvin, dean of admissions, in an email to The Campus.

This larger class of 2025, along with already enrolled students who took time off during the pandemic returning to Middlebury, led to higher enrollment overall during the fall 2021 semester. At the time, The Campus reported that there were over 2,800 students enrolled.

The fall 2021 semester was unique in that a number of juniors were placed in satellite housing at Breadloaf and the Marriott. The college also used the Inn on the Green as student housing for the first time that fall after purchasing it in August 2021.

The trend of high enrollment during fall semesters continued the following year with 2,790 students on campus in the fall of 2022. Students were once again housed at the Inn on the Green and the over-enrollment caused additional challenges on campus, including over-enrolled classes and limited parking availability.

THOMAS NEVINS / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

The Inn on the Green has been used for student housing since the fall of 2021. The college plans to sell it in 2025.

With higher enrollment, Dining Services is also responsible for feeding more students than usual, and the lunch rush is magnified. Provost described the lunch rush as the greater stressor on dining services, but said that also has more of a connection to the schedule.

Greater challenges for students to register for classes they wanted and needed was another significant consequence of higher enrollment over the past few fall semesters.

"Students got into a lot more of their top choice courses this spring because there was 200 less students on campus," Provost said.

The college is trying to prevent a repeat of the issues that arose as a result of higher enrollment in the fall 2023 semester by asking students earlier this spring about their plans for the fall 2024 semester.

"We're trying to put earlier notification of students' intention for the fall," Provost said. "Right now... if you don't register for classes, you're still in the pipeline. So the Enrollment Committee is trying to get better at that."

The $10,000 incentive to take a leave of absence this past fall became necessary late in the summer because the administration did not know exactly how many students planned to be on campus until then, and needed a solution to high enrollment when they realized the actual numbers, according to The Campus' prior reporting.

Forty two students ultimately took the fall off in exchange for the stipend, causing a financial cost of $420,000 in total to provide those students with their stipends, according to Provost.

In addition, with more typical enrollment numbers this semester, fewer students are living off-campus, according to AJ Place, associate dean for student life.

"The number of students living off campus this semester is the lowest it's been in a number of years, which is a welcome change," Place wrote.

In the past few years, an increase in students living off campus has contributed to conflict with the town. With a less extreme level of over-enrollment expected for next fall, Place anticipates being able to house all students on campus again.

"The current projection for the fall is around 2,750, which we are able to accommodate," Place wrote.

The Middlebury Campus

Are you a staff member at Middlebury? Do you have a story to share?

The Middlebury Campus is looking to hear from college employees about their experiences working here.

Submit an anonymous tip at go/campustip/ or this QR code:

Want to submit an op-ed about your opinions on the college? Email campus@middlebury.edu to learn how.

SHELBURNE, VT.-BASED THRIFT STORE DOUBLES AS NONPROFIT, AIMS TO STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY

By AGNES WANG
Contributing Writer

Driving along Route 7 between Burlington and Middlebury, it is almost certain that passers-by will notice a quaint, two-story yellow building that houses Shelburne Charlotte Hinesburg Interfaith Projects, also known as SCHIP.

The nonprofit resale store sells jewelry, designer clothing, artwork and antiques.

SCHIP was founded in 2003 by a group of pastors who saw an opportunity to turn the used clothing they received from the community into income which could be redirected back into the local area. The store accepts gently used goods which are then sent to a warehouse to be thoroughly checked, cleaned and eventually tagged for sale in the store, according to Douglas Taff, chairman of the board at SCHIP.

Any profits made from sales are distributed in the form of grants, most commonly in amounts of up to $3,000. Since its inception, SCHIP has granted over $885,000 to local organizations, churches and schools located across the towns of Shelburne, Charlotte and Hinesburg, Vt. Although there are many factors in the grant-giving decision, Taff emphasized that SCHIP does not give grants for payroll purposes or for ongoing operations. Instead, the nonprofit looks out for new operations and ideas to fund and aims to help organizations become self-sustaining.

Taff cited an example with the Shelburne Rescue last fall, which sought upgraded paramedic equipment last year that would have cost $19,000. SCHIP was able to provide $9,000 as seed money to the department, which allowed them to raise more funds and successfully acquire the new system.

"We said, "I think this is enough seed money for you to proceed and get the rest" and of course they did. Once someone has actually started the ball rolling, that did it." Taff said. "What we do is we turn this volume of clothes into grants."

The store's customers range from community members to tourists. Ali Gately, head of publicity for SCHIP, attributed the organization's wide range of customers to its extensive selection, affordable prices and the store's philanthropic mission.

Aine Powers '24 visited the store with friends over February break, when the group purchased an $11 L.L Bean sweater along with two handmade sweaters.

"It felt great to feel like you were giving back to the community by shopping there. Thrifting is already more environmentally friendly than buying new and a well-loved choice for college students with low budgets so the mission of the store definitely made it an even better option," Powers wrote in a message to The Campus.

However, like many businesses, SCHIP was disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic when the store had to temporarily shut down. Despite this setback, Taff highlighted the tremendous growth SCHIP has experienced recently, with sales doubling in size in the last three years.

He attributed the success partly to the store's transition to a more digitized operation, which meant replacing old cash registers, collecting emails and directing mail to customers about sales. Gately added that the recent incorporation of Square, the mobile point-of-sale system, has been monumental in helping track business inventory and expanding the amount of sales it makes outside the physical store.

"We get to see what sells, during which month, what's popular, what isn't, what are the best months for sales, etc," Gately said. "So this introduction of the Square, which happened last year, has really broadened our ability to to sell more and do more and be more aware of what the community needs are."

Another key player in the success of the organization, Taff shared, was SCHIP's diversification of the organization's board and unique employment system. For example, one team member was previously involved in the New York City fashion industry, and with her expertise, the organization was able to better understand what items they were receiving and how to price them.

COURTESY PHOTO/DOUGLAS TAFF
The two-story yellow house located along Highway 7 houses the SCHIP nonprofit resale store.

The improvements have allowed SCHIP to recently introduce larger grants, up to $15,000, to local organizations. To be eligible for this grant, SCHIP requires businesses to provide a comprehensive business plan and a six month report that details the planned use of the grant.

One of these larger grants was used to fund Shelburne Rescue's new paramedical system, Taff explained.

SCHIP's recent rapid growth, however, has also led to new challenges. Taff said that the store receives up to 30 large garbage bags worth of donated goods per week, which the 900 square foot shop cannot always accommodate.

Their solution has been to recycle items by passing them on to ReStore, a homebuilding nonprofit organization. While expanding the space might be in store for the future, for now, Gates said, SCHIP's priority lies in assisting the citizens of its communities.

"We want the money to go to grants. That's our whole mission. So as much as we'd love to get a bigger space, it's not about us. It's about the community," she said.

Taff credited SCHIP's employees for its growing vitality, noting that the staff do much of the work. The team includes many retired community members, along with college students looking to earn extra money.

SCHIP does not employ anyone full time, with people working anywhere from four hours to thirty hours a week.

"So they're all working there because they want to, not because they have to. And the other thing is we pay relatively good wages. Actually excellent wages. For these people, we want their 100%," Taff said.

Gately added that the Vermont community has been crucial to the store's success throughout the years.

"We've been very, very fortunate and I think a lot of that has to do with the Vermont mentality and it just seems to be a place that has risen in importance," Gately said. 'It's the spirit of donating, of giving back, volunteering and yet seeing the fruits of your labors."

With an eye to the future, Taff explained how SCHIP has multiple avenues such as online sales, more and bigger locations, and new fashion lines to expand while keeping itself grounded in the local community.

"Someday we will need more space. But at no time will we want to move very far from where we are in our communities, which have been great support," Taff said. "We're going to stay right on Route 7 in Shelburne if we can."

ILSLEY PUBLIC LIBRARY HOSTS REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS TALK SERIES THROUGHOUT THE SPRING

By IZZY RONDA
Contributing Writer

Meg Mott, a Putney, Vt. based town meeting moderator, is coming to Middlebury's Ilsley Public Library to speak about reproductive rights politics. The event, titled "How to Trust The People With Reproductive Rights," will take place over the course of three separate days: March 9, March 16 and March 23, each starting at 1:00 p.m.

Mott will open with the first part of her series: "The Supreme Court's Role in Reproductive Freedom." The following Saturday, she will host "Out of the Courts and onto the Ballots," and the talks will end with the final part of the series, "Better Strategies for Pluralism."

In her first talk, Mott plans to distribute cards that describe the background of the recent Roe v. Wade Supreme Court decision as well as the specifics of the Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization case. At the end of her talk, Mott typically opens the floor up for questions and comments, encouraging audience members to speak up.

She recognizes the vulnerable position one takes while expressing their own personal views on a contentious political issue such as reproductive rights, but said that those conversations are necessary in order to make progress.

COURTESY PHOTO/ILSLEY PUBLIC LIBRARY
Putney-based town meeting moderator Meg Mott is coming to the town of Middlebury to host reproductive rights talks at the public library.

Mott is currently a Professor of Political Theory at Keene State College in New Hampshire, and formerly taught at Marlboro College in southwestern Vermont. Along with her career in academia, Mott described herself as an activist through advocacy against domestic violence and involvement in the AIDS awareness movement.

Mott has served as a town moderator in Putney since 2015, which has given her the platform to encourage groups of people with differing opinions to engage in productive conversation regarding hot-topic issues.

"We need to go back to building sentences. We need to have more arguments, not fewer arguments," Mott said. "I think that's probably what always drives me: Whenever there's a group of people, and they take a position, and they're sure their position is right, I want there to be some strong counter argument."

In tandem with her responsibilities as Putney town moderator, Mott hosts events throughout Vermont. In fall 2022, she spoke at Ilsley Public Library at her event, "Must Free Speech Endure Hate Speech?" where she sought to explain the legalities of free speech and to allow for debate among audience members.

Renee Ursitti, adult services librarian at Ilsley Public Library, praised Mott's work and her first presentation at the library in 2022.

"Many of the folks who were at that program reached out to me to say what a wonderful speaker and moderator she was and they would love to have her again," Ursitti said.

Both Mott and Ursitti are excited about the "How to Trust The People With Reproductive Rights" series, as they believe that the topic of reproductive rights is a pressing and controversial issue on which one can never be too educated.

The talk will not support either "side" but will focus on the history of the issue. Ursitti hopes that people with differing opinions on the subject, particularly young voters, come to the event.

Both Mott and Ursitti hope to see large amounts of community and student participation, and are actively advertising for the event.

The Feminist Action at Middlebury club recognizes the same difficulty that Mott addresses, and acknowledges that discussions of reproductive rights are complex.

"Just as your beliefs are deeply ingrained, theirs probably are as well," Kate Wilmot '26, co-president of the club, wrote in an email to The Campus. "Talking in terms of bodily autonomy and personal decision making can be productive as everyone wants to make their own choices."

Ursitti hopes the event can be productive in terms of finding some shared opinions.

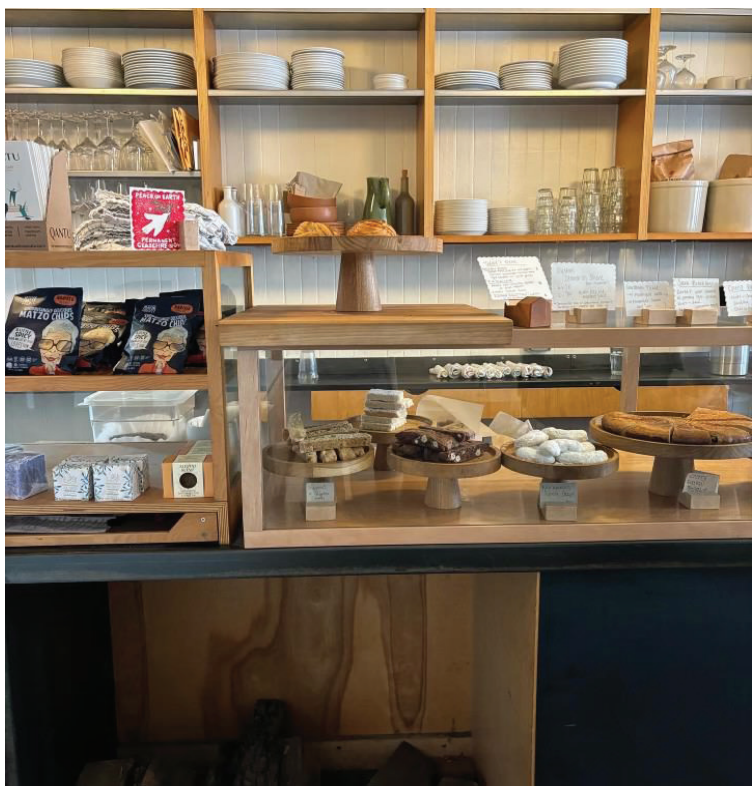
"I hope that it opens up space for folks who may not agree to find some common ground and we can move forward and maybe make some better decisions," she said.

Ursitti echoed Mott's own desires for her talks.

"I'm hoping that people come who have strong opinions on this topic and yet care more about democracy than they do about hating their enemies," Mott said. "I'm just thrilled to be able to provide a forum for somebody who can handle it all and give folks the opportunity to ask the questions, to get the information, to maybe even see the other side, whatever side you're on."

LIV, LOVE, LOCAL: VERGENNES LAUNDRY

Liv, Love, Local is a column highlighting local businesses of Vermont, especially cafés and restaurants in the Middlebury area. Through interviews with owners, I want to highlight the specific successes and challenges that come along with small business ownership in Vermont, the hard work owners and employees put into these businesses, and how these spots serve as places to build community and connection.



OLIVIA MUELLER/THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS
Vergennes Laundry uses a wood fire to bake all of its bread and about half of its pastry

By OLIVIA MUELLER
News Editor

In the three years since its opening, Nadia Dole's Vergennes Laundry, a wood-fired bakery and épicerie, has expanded its food menu and retail offerings as well as launched a dinner series, with future plans for community-based events.

Originally from Canada, Dole first visited Vergennes Laundry on her way to see family in Montreal back when the café was owned by founders Julianne Jones and Didier Murat.

"I had come in and I absolutely loved it," Dole said.

In 2017, Jones and Murat put the café up for sale. Dole strongly considered buying the café, but wanting to spend time with her young daughter, she hesitated. "I just thought the timing was not right," she said.

When the Covid-19 pandemic hit, Dole made an offer to then-owner Christian Kruse. While her offer was initially declined, Dole received an acceptance call back in May of 2020 and made the move from Putney, Vt. to Vergennes.

At the time, Dole had been operating a pop-up down the street in the town of Vergennes and was planning a café concept where she roasted her own coffee. She had worked with Vermont Artisan in Waterbury, Vt. to narrow in on her preferred roasting presets for a wood-fired coffee bean.

Prior to opening Vergennes Laundry, Dole had operated other cafés and led photography and videography workshops around the world centered on culinary and travel.

Dole's extensive travel experience informed the menu at Vergennes Laundry. Inspired by her French and Middle Eastern heritage, Dole not only serves French dishes like oeufs cocotte and croissants, but also Turkish eggs and a breakfast panini with harissa mayo.

Dole described learning how to bake on a wood fire as one of the largest challenges when she opened Vergennes Laundry.

"I always thought I was going to find a baker," Dole said. She described the learning curve of baking on a wood fire as a maddening experience.

"You've spent hours in preparation of something and put it into the woodfire and it would burn or it wouldn't rise and you'd start again," she said. With only one other employee in the first six months of operation, and lines down the block due to high demand — Vergennes Laundry was one of the few cafés open at all between Middlebury and Shelburne at the time in the thick of Covid-19 — Dole felt pressure to focus her attention on producing bread and pastries.

To this day, Vergennes Laundry uses a wood fire to bake all of its bread and about half of its pastry. Baking woodfired bread creates a smokier, sweeter taste profile, due to the semolina flour interacting with the bed of the wood fire and creating a coating.

Though the staff at Vergennes Laundry has grown since its early days in the pandemic, there are other challenges, such as being a café in Vermont, where there are few bakers to hire.

Dole was surprised by how difficult staffing was. Balancing her busy work life and being a mother to her daughter, Poet, has been difficult. "Especially the first two years. I literally worked six days a week for about 18 to 20 hours," Dole added.

Four years into running Vergennes Laundry, Dole now experiences fewer staffing challenges and can direct more time into building the business's offerings. Leveraging her experience from leading culinary-focused retreats and her experiences in Morocco, Dole has launched a Wednesday night pre-fixe dinner series.

"I didn't want to open a restaurant in the evening where people just pop in, I wanted to curate experiences for people where they didn't have to make a decision," she said.

Dole added that customers get to see a different side to the café by night. "This whole place is candle lit and the fire's going. It's like they feel like they're let into this secret dinner, they're very transported," Dole described. "We were going to take you on a culinary journey."

The communal nature of the dinner experience is also important to Dole. At the dinners, parties are invited to sit at shared tables. "Our dinners last about three hours. So many people leave here with new friends," she said.

Dole also enjoys introducing unique flavor profiles and foods like Turkish eggs to diners who may have come in expecting a conventional dish like ham and eggs.

"They'll give it a try and they'll come and find you and say that's the best breakfast I've ever had," she said. "We get such a high."

While Dole has pivoted from her initial vision of roasting her own coffee, she now purchases coffee roasted on the wood fire, following the preset specification she developed with Vermont Artisan Coffee & Tea.

"I wanted women-run farms, I wanted organic and I wanted wood-fired and [Vermont Artisan is] able to do that for me," she said. While Dole prefers a darker roast, she also sources light-roast coffee from Duchess Coffee in Brattleboro, Vt. "They do a honey [process] roast, they're really pushing the envelope," said Dole.

On the food side, Dole embraces local and seasonal ingredients. She cited her popular Christmas tile cookies as an example of this.

"They are by far the best thing that we make and people literally buy a hundred dollar's worth, like they'll buy 20 of them and they're beautiful," Dole said, adding that she chooses to keep them as a holiday special to retain their value as seasonal favorites for customers.

Dole appreciates the community support she has experienced in Vergennes, which she found different from her time living in Montreal. "You find yourself in a community and people are caring about you and caring about your staff and your wellbeing, you're caring about loved ones," she explained. "That part's brand new and kind of nice about a small town."

Dole's vision for the future at Vergennes Laundry not only includes continued pop-up dinners in the Wednesday night series, but also launching Sunday night pizza nights with live music.

She hopes to host Sunday night events with woodfired pizza, music, microbrews, wines and salad.

Crafting experiences where customers can build community over food brings Dole purpose, as she highlighted the parts of the job that bring her joy.

"The sound of the clinking of glasses, of the laughter, even though you can't hear the details of the conversation," she said, describing parts of the job that bring her joy. "I can't go to every café now, but I create the experience for other people. So I'm still a witness in earshot of it."

"Up for Discussion": A salon series at Town Hall Theater

By KATRINA SCHWARZ
Local Editor

In a modern twist on old-fashioned salons, the Up for Discussion lecture series, hosted by the Vermont Book Shop and taking place at Town Hall Theater, aims to create a space for open community conversation this spring. The series, originally an idea hatched by Vermont Book Shop owner Becky Dayton, will feature speakers from both the college and broader community to cover literature, art, film and contemporary issues.

"I wanted to do something locally that gave other people the opportunity to do what I wanted, which was to hear from experts, specifically Middlebury College faculty, but I didn't just want to be talked to," Dayton told The Campus. "I wanted to learn something and then have the opportunity to discuss it with like-minded people."

Dayton added that despite living in Middlebury for three decades, she feels a disconnect between the community and the college.

"I think that that's a function of college students and faculty being focused on their scholarship, but there has been an opportunity lacking to bring those things together at a casual level where people can cross some of those boundaries, meet one another, socialize, and learn something from one another," she said.

Dayton decided to partner with the Town Hall Theater to help foster some of this desired connection. Lisa Mitchell, executive director of the Town Hall Theater, secured a grant from Vermont Humanities that not only makes the Up for Discussion series possible, but also free to attend. Attendees can register through the Vermont Book Shop or Town Hall Theater websites, and no preparation is required, but material further exploring each topic will be provided.

There are currently four lectures on the schedule. The first, which took place on March 5, focused on the concept of "awe," and was led by Associate Professor of History of Art and Architecture Katy Smith Abbot and Assistant Professor of Music Matthew Taylor. Smith Abbot is currently in the process of curating "Invitation to Awe," an exhibit by Middlebury students and faculty, including Taylor, which will open at the Middlebury College Museum of Art in September 2024.

"I just think it's a really interesting subject, what happens when you experience something awesome," Dayton said on the concept of awe.

The next lecture in the series, "The Art of Translation," will take place on Tuesday, May 7 at 5:30 p.m. and will feature Michael Katz, professor emeritus of Russian and east European studies and Chris Keathly, Walter J. Cerf distinguished Professor of Film and Media Culture. The two will discuss the adaptation of film to literature, as well as the translation of film into different languages.

"Youth Sports in Society," the third scheduled lecture, will be held on Tuesday, June 11 at 5:30 p.m. The lecture portion of the evening will be delivered by Erin Quinn, the director of athletics at the college and Alex Wolff, a sports writer and founder of the Vermont Frost Heaves basketball team.

Wolff said that youth sports span across many areas in the community, and he tries to be explicit about some of the problems in youth sports, while also elucidating their benefits.

"If you wander over to Middlebury High School in the fall, you will see in the stands the entire community, because on the field are kids from all of the towns that feed into the school district. I try to be clear eyed about the problematic parts of youth sports," Wolff said. "At the same time, there is this very powerful role that community based sports can have in civic cohesion and getting people across economic lines interacting with one another."

When Dayton reached out to Wolff to participate, he was drawn to the roundtable format.

"In the salons of old, there was an attempt by the host to kind of assemble a group that would create friction in a good way, where people could rub up against each other and ideas could be generated," Wolff said. "Becky gave me the bandwidth to think of a topic and then try to assemble a couple of other people I could play off of, simply setting the table for discussion."

The fourth lecture, titled "Living Deliberately: What Thoreau Means Today," will take place on Tuesday, Oct. 8. Julian W. Abernethy Professor of Literature Dan Brayton and Associate Professor of Environmental Studies Rebecca Gould will speak at the event.

Although there are only four talks scheduled as of now, Dayton hopes to continue Up For Discussion in the future as she works to expand the selection of topics into previously uncovered areas.

COURTESY PHOTO/ ERIN JONES-POPPE
The Awe Talks series collaboration between Vermont Book Shop and Town Hall Theater launched in early March.

SARAH SAYS: THE CULT OF BEAUTY

Op-Ed

Sarah Miller *is a member of the class of 2024 and is an Editor At Large for The Campus.*

On a semi-weekly basis, Sarah Miller shares her thoughts on culture and campus life.

On the last Saturday of J-Term, I sprained my ankle. I knew it was bad immediately from the brilliant starburst of pain ricocheting through my body as I wondered how I could manage the two hundred steps home.

The nurse's "wow," when she examined the ankle the next afternoon gratified me; no one could argue with the evidence of my pain. Before I left, I was outfitted with compression bandages, crutches and a black boot that seemed disproportionate to the injury's surface area. The boot drew almost as much attention as my new halting gait. I tried hiding it under long skirts, conscious of my vanity. But in the days that followed, a tenderness blossomed for the injury, a hostage-like affection for the bruises and swelling.

Tracking the ankle became part medical responsibility (when would I be able to walk on it again?) and a secret pleasure, because my ankle was the only part of me under no imperative of beauty, the very ugliness of my injury a testament to my strength.

Membership in the cult of beauty is a prerequisite for girlhood. I can't remember when beauty became my governing power, can't remember an age when I did not look at myself with the eye of an appraiser. If there's escape from the cult, I've yet to find it.

I've been fortunate to have a feminist education. Never in my life did I get the impression my male classmates were intellectually superior, and at every turn feminist ideas were encouraged. I cut my teeth early on Jane Eyre and Margaret Atwood and was nearly a Gender, Sexuality and Feminist Studies minor here. However, underneath the intellectual currents of my feminism runs a counter current that demands I pay fealty to beauty.

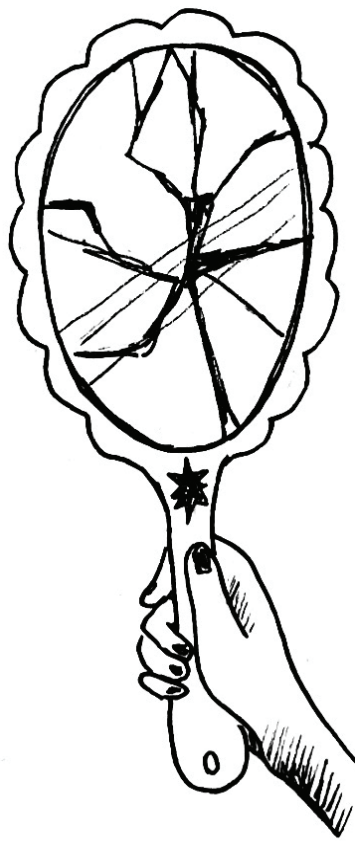
One of the great paradoxes of modern feminism is that women must now not only be intelligent and passionate (though those passions are circumscribed through narrow confines of palatable women's ambition), but they also have to continue to stay attractive.

For most of my life, body image was framed to me as an issue of self-esteem. The tragedy of girlhood was a lack of confidence on the scale of the individual. However, soon into my time at Middlebury this framing began to bother me. By consigning body image to the vagaries of self-love, we suggest it is a women's issue — which is to say, fundamentally unimportant.

As a first-year, I was selected as a finalist for the Spencer Prize. I used my six minutes to argue that body image is a pressing political and economic issue. Although the statistics have changed since my speech, in 2022 the beauty industry (defined as skincare, fragrance, makeup and hair care) was valued at approximately $430 billion, the plastic surgery industry was valued at $45.5 billion, and the diet industry was valued at approximately $76 billion a year. This year, the anti-obesity drug industry reached $6 billion and with the fast-growing popularity of drugs like Ozempic, Goldman Sachs estimates by 2030 it could be a $100 billion industry. In "body image," the joint engines of patriarchy and capitalism conspire to make self-hatred good business.

This is without tallying the hours and earnings that countless women have lost while struggling with eating disorders and disordered eating, sacrificing peak academic or employment capacity in pursuit of the "perfect" body. Those are incalculable statistics.

In my speech, I foregrounded my argument in my history with disordered eating. Throughout high school, I struggled with an insecurity about my weight that was often disproportionate to its reality. Especially in the fall of my senior year, I began to restrict myself, counting my victories on the calorie tracking app My Fitness Pal and the pangs of hunger that followed me to sleep. To be clear, this was never an eating disorder. I met the criteria for disordered eating, a clinically vague term. One survey found 65% of American women between the ages of 25 and 45 report disordered eating behaviors. My practices were disordered but not statistically abnormal.



Skiles Roberts-Salvador

At that same time, in my Narrative Journalism elective, I was conducting long interviews with women on my high school crew team who had developed eating disorders or disordered eating patterns. The irony in our use of many of the same calorie control methods was not lost on me while I nodded in sympathy to their stories and took extensive notes.

When I think of that version of myself, measuring virtue in low-fat yogurt cups, she seems like a different person. It was maybe the saddest I have been in my whole life. I contextualize my high school behavior as a socially rewarded means of mitigating the deep sadness I carried with me. I liked being told how good I looked; I sucked on the taste of my friends' jealousy like it was a hard candy.

The insidious truth behind the cult of beauty is that beauty is a zero-sum game. Beauty is always relative; it is never enough to be merely beautiful, we must also be more beautiful than someone else, or be the most beautiful. The cavernous hole of beauty is a want without end. There will always be another woman's thighs, boobs or taut stomach that makes me turn to my own body in alien recognition.

I ended my Spencer Prize speech with a tentative optimism. I concluded with the story of the scale I begged my mother to send the first week of my freshmen year, far more panicked at the specter of the freshman fifteen than Covid-19. I never opened the scale, and my best friend at the time stuck a Post-It on it requesting that I call her if I ever felt like using it. The optimism was motivated by the demands of the genre (people like a happy ending) but was also genuinely felt. My issues with food and body image were so 2020; I was beyond them.

This is the type of hubris that begs for a fall.

My fall came in the basement of Jefferson Gynecology while the nurse recorded my vitals. Since my senior year of high school, I have asked nurses to keep my weight from me, but on that morning, acting on morbid curiosity or simple negligence, I was silent. When I saw the number behind me I crumpled, much like when in sophomore year I was punched straight on the nose.

The weight I gained felt like failure, much the same as if I had failed to turn in an assignment on time on Canvas: There was no one but myself to blame for neglecting the job. Beauty feels like the worst job to me, a job with no financial benefit that we continue to give a strange moral weight.

I had always been in the grip of the cult of beauty; it was only when I was no longer a size zero nineteen-year-old that I felt its sting.

I could close this piece with a moment of revelation: the warmth of the sun as I took my first steps out of the boot on the Santa Monica boardwalk, sweat soaking my hairline while my friends transform into Amazonian goddesses on the indoor bike, that expansive feeling when I feel that I am beautiful and everyone else is, too.

But there is also this: begging my friends to tell me I was pretty just a few weeks ago on the walk back from bar night, how quick it takes for a glance at the pimples on my face to demolish me and remembering my nineteen-year-old self giving a speech on the tyranny of beauty while she admires the shape of her rose quartz earrings in the camera.

The weight I gained felt like failure, much the same as if I had failed to turn in an assignment on time on Canvas: There was no one but myself to blame for neglecting the job. Beauty feels like the worst job to me, a job with no financial benefit that we continue to give a strange moral weight.

I had always been in the grip of the cult of beauty; it was only when I was no longer a size zero nineteen-year-old that I felt its sting.

I could close this piece with a moment of revelation: the warmth of the sun as I took my first steps out of the boot on the Santa Monica boardwalk, sweat soaking my hairline while my friends transform into Amazonian goddesses on the indoor bike, that expansive feeling when I feel that I am beautiful and everyone else is, too.

But there is also this: begging my friends to tell me I was pretty just a few weeks ago on the walk back from bar night, how quick it takes for a glance at the pimples on my face to demolish me, and remembering my nineteen-year-old self giving a speech on the tyranny of beauty while she admires the shape of her rose quartz earrings in the camera.

SPECS PANTHER COLUMN #4: FIVE THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT...

SPECS Panther is a mascot for SPECS (sex-positive education for college students) and serves the Middlebury community. As a part of Health & Wellness Education, SPECS Panther seeks to educate and spark independent dialogue, not be the end-all be-all resource on campus. We encourage Midd kids to break down the walls of silence by engaging in sex-positive conversation — wherever, with whomever, and about whatever is most comfortable, easy and safe for you. Our editions will be fun and educational!

Op-Ed

Sarah Kimmel *is a member of the class of 2024.* ***Sydney Rogers*** *is a member of the class of 2025.*

SPECS Panther is back for 2024, this time coming to you with some interesting sex, pleasure and anatomy facts! When it comes to sexuality and pleasure, learning about anatomy can often get thrown by the wayside. Many people may think that human bodies and genitalia are relatively straightforward, yet misconceptions are prevalent in many folks' understanding of these topics.

An example of this lies in the understanding of the "vagina." Many people refer to their outer genitalia as the vagina, but this area is actually the vulva. Anatomically, the vagina is the interior structure connecting the uterus to the outside of the body. To this point, anatomical knowledge is important for understanding our bodies, communicating with partners and talking to healthcare providers about questions and concerns. As SPECS educators, we're here to share five more things you may not know about anatomy.

Size of the clit

First, let's discuss the size of the clitoris. If you're unfamiliar with the term, the clitoris (also known as the "clit") refers to an area of the vulva where stimulation can be pleasurable for people with a uterus, due to the presence of many nerve endings. The clit can be found at the top of the vulva where the inner lips of the vagina meet. It's often described as "pea-shaped," but it's important to note that clitorises vary in size, and can be as large as a thumb. Many people are unaware that the clit extends past the exterior portion (known as the clitoral glans). Inside the body, the clitoris both stretches inward and down the sides of the vagina, and the size of the entire structure ranges from approximately 3.5 to 4.25 inches long, and 2.5 inches wide.

Erogenous zones

Next, let's shed some light on erogenous zones. An erogenous zone is an area of the body that may feel pleasurable when touched. It's hypothesized that these "zones" can feel nice because they have more nerve endings and aren't frequently stimulated. It's important to note that while we all have erogenous zones, the sensitivity of these points vary from person to person. The erogenous zones of the body range from the more obvious ones, such as the nipples, mouth and inner thigh, to areas you might not consider, like the small of the back, ears, inner wrist, behind the knee and the scalp. There are dozens of resources available online, and we suggest exploring what feels good on yourself or your partners.

The G-spot, the A-spot and the P-spot

You may have heard of the G-spot, but have you heard of the A-spot or the P-spot? That's right, there are actually three internal areas known to provide increased pleasure with penetrative stimulation. Two of these spots, the G-spot and A-spot, are in the vagina, while the P-spot is located in the anus of those with penises.

The G-spot is the most well-known of these regions. Specifically, the G-spot is the area of the vagina overlaying the Skene's gland, which is responsible for the phenomenon known as "squirting," or vaginal ejaculation. The G-spot is an elevated, spongy area that swells with arousal. It is located two to four inches up, along the front vaginal wall closest to the belly button. Stimulation of the G-spot, and thus the Skene's gland, can be intensely pleasurable and even cause ejaculation in some people with vaginas.

The A-spot, also referred to as the AFE zone, is located along the front vaginal wall as well. However, the A-spot is located several inches higher than the G-spot, right below the cervix. The A-spot is smooth and non-differentiable from the rest of the vaginal wall, but stimulation of the A-spot has been documented to lead to intense vaginal orgasms as well as increased vaginal lubrication.

Last but not least the P-spot, located in the anus, is the main internal erogenous zone for those with penises. This area is one to two inches up against the front wall of the anus overlaying the prostate. Pressure to the P-spot can be intensely pleasurable, often leading to prostate orgasms, but may also be painful for some. As with any form of anal stimulation, make sure to use lube and a flared toy, as the anus is a non-self-lubricating sphincter. Any of these areas can be located for stimulation by fingers, a penis or a sex toy. However, it is important to remember that these spots can be very sensitive and aren't pleasurable for everyone, so don't forget to take it slow when exploring new areas of your body to ensure the most enjoyable experience.

By providing a few facts about anatomy, we hope you gained new information and confidence about exploring your body. As members of SPECS, we believe that this knowledge can be empowering, allowing you to be more in touch with yourself and your partner(s).

IT IS NOT A COINCIDENCE WE ARE ALL HISTORY MAJORS

Notes from the Desk

Maggie Reynolds '24, Katie Futterman '24 & Ryan McElroy '25 *are the Executive Team of The Middlebury Campus.*

"Maggie Reynolds, editor in chief, history major. Katie Futterman, managing editor, history major. Ryan McElroy, managing editor, history major."

As the executive team of The Campus, we go to a lot of meetings. Our shared major never fails to get a surprised reaction from administrators.

Even our professors are abuzz with the news — we've heard from some anonymous sources that our common academic interest has come up as a point of pride in history department faculty meetings. Some faculty even seem to slyly reference The Middlebury Campus in their lectures, trading knowing glances and nodding to us as we sit in class in our branded sweatshirts.

We were too surprised to discover in our initial icebreakers that all three of us on this year's executive team were history majors. We did not plan it this way, nor was it a core requirement in the job description. But after reflecting on this odd similarity in our backgrounds, we have decided that this was not just a coincidence or quirk: the history major is uniquely suited to our role as student journalists.

Since all three of us have been asked more times than we can count why we are not English majors, or how we're enjoying the (nonexistent) journalism program at Middlebury, we are here to make a case for the history major as it relates to journalism. Studying history allows us to develop the reading and nonfiction writing skills pertinent to journalism, as well as dive into a wide range of subjects for the short length of a semester, much like how journalists dive into various topics while writing stories.

While the history major of course has some requirements — a pre-1800 course, courses in three of the seven regions of the world, among others — students in the department are largely able to pick classes based on the different topics that interest them.

Between the three of us, we have taken courses on historical subjects as varied as "Oil, Opium and Oligarchs," "The Soviet Experiment" and "Christians in the Modern Middle East." We are not experts in any one historical area or time period, but our experience learning about different topics and points in history prepares us well for the daily job of a journalist.

THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS / THE EXECUTIVE TEAM

All three members of this year's executive team are history majors. Here they are in their natural habitat, The Middlebury Campus office, with their prized papers

Being a reporter requires us to become experts on new topics on a monthly, weekly or even daily basis in order to turn around a thoroughly researched news story. We have spent semesters attempting to become experts on the history of Pakistan or Vermont enlistment in the Civil War, which translates well to mastering specific topics quickly to report on them.

Many 100 and 200 level history courses focus on teaching students to effectively read primary and secondary sources, from which they are tasked with constructing a comprehensive historical narrative. We learn to ask the questions, "what was this author's purpose in writing this source?," "who was the intended audience for this source?" and "what information might be missing from this source?"

Piecing together an accurate representation of history from various sources is similar to a journalist's task of determining the facts and angle of a story from the interviews they have conducted. Journalists must keep in mind sources' potential biases and construct a fair narrative from different perspectives in the same way that we develop the skills of critically analyzing existing sources in history courses.

While English or political science students spend considerable time reading theory and evaluating ideas that some may say lack any basis in reality, the history major is more focused on researching and interpreting facts. We are drawn to the chance history classes give us to read varied sources — ranging from letters and newspaper archives to books and scholarly articles — and develop our own understandings of the information we read.

Even if they do not choose to write a senior thesis, history majors at Middlebury must complete HIST 600: the junior thesis. By producing a 20 to 25 page research report, this historical research seminar forces history students to choose an original topic of inquiry and get into the records of primary source research. From conducting oral history interviews to digging into Vermont newspaper archives from the 1960s and 70s, the HIST 600 project taught us to be self-directed and produce original research in the same way that journalists aim to with each news story they write.

Through our years spent on The Campus and our semesters studying history at Middlebury, we have seen that history makes us better journalists, and journalism makes us better history students. The two disciplines together allow us to be sharp readers, effective verbal communicators and efficient writers.

Thanks to the knowledge we have gained from the Middlebury history department and our experiences as student-journalists, we know how to pick out the biases in a source, put together an accurate representation of what happened in an event and produce rigorously researched, unbiased writing.

We do not necessarily intend for this to read as unjustified propaganda for the history department; rather, we hope to present this op-ed as a fact-based, peer-reviewed, historiographically-minded, originally researched scholarly work — rigorously cited in line with 9th edition Turabian, of course — to argue that history is the best major.

INFLATED GRADES, DEFLATED EGOS: TACKLING MIDDLEBURY'S PROBLEMATIC GRADING CULTURE

Editorial

The editorial represents the opinion of the Middlebury Campus Editorial Board.

Last week, we reported on grade inflation at Middlebury. The average GPA among Middlebury students has risen substantially in recent years, from 3.00 in 1987 to 3.35 in 2005 to 3.65 in the spring of 2023. There are a variety of potential explanations for the grade inflation issue, from technology's ability to aid students in cheating to Middlebury's increased selectivity and a higher number of incoming students in the top 10% of their high school class.

But with either of these explanations, the problem lies in the inconsistency of grading policies, and the subsequent confusion of the meaning of grades. Rather than alleviating stress, grade inflation has done quite the opposite, leading students to have more fear of getting a low grade, and thereby make decisions based on grades, rather than for the sake of learning.

Today at Middlebury, grades paradoxically mean both more and less than ever. Student stress around grades seems to be at an all-time high, yet the data tells us that an A carries the least weight it ever has. The problem with grade inflation is that once it starts, it is hard to stop. It is, in part, a self-fulfilling prophecy.

It is unfortunate that grade inflation contributes to students prioritizing grades as the end result of their education, rather than being proud of the improved skills and new knowledge they have acquired in their time here. We do not aspire to resolve the issue of grade inflation on this campus or in these pages — it is clearly a national issue across higher education — but it should not be normalized or taken as an immutable tenet of a modern education.

Rather, we must consider tangible ways to improve our school's culture around grading: Let's prioritize asking for honest, constructive feedback, and not running away from every challenging course because of its scary reputation. And professors, we ask that you consider increased transparency around grading. Tell us the grade breakdown for assignments to provide context to our work. Even for students who succeed and earn A's, provide critical feedback that will remind us we all have room to grow.

It makes sense that students at Middlebury care about their grades, and we cannot in good faith tell you not to stress. After all, grades were an essential part of all of our high schools — making them a priority is arguably why we are here right now — but it would be naive to say they don't matter now. Graduate schools heavily consider a student's transcript when deciding whether or not to admit them. Competitive jobs, especially in fields like consulting and finance, often have GPA thresholds that applicants must meet to even be considered for an interview. Stress around grades is not unmerited.

The assumption when we talk about grade inflation is that all students benefit from receiving easy A's. As Zeitgeist 5.0 showed last year, there can be significant fluctuations in average GPA by major across different departments, although it is unclear if that depends on different grading policies or simply the quantity and quality of students each discipline attracts. Making generalizations about grade inflation does not take into account individual professors' grading policies. The reality is, a lack of consistency across professor's grading policies means that a student's GPA is dependent on the specific courses and professors they choose.

Board members noted having taken classes where, on the first day, the professor tells the class that everyone will get an A if they put in a decent amount of work. For some students, this may be a relief, an indicator that they can just focus on learning. Unfortunately, though, some students will take that as permission to put in less effort, which not only robs them of their own educational experience, but also is detrimental to everyone else's classroom experience.

Students are left wondering if an A really means their work was excellent, or if it is just the professor's default. We ask professors to consider sharing a breakdown of class grades on assignments so students can better understand where they stand.

We also ask professors to continue to provide thoughtful feedback, no matter the grade. Board members noted how motivated it makes them feel when a professor leaves a note at the end of an essay with things they did well and constructive criticism instead of only a letter grade, even if that feedback is negative. It makes the student feel that their instructor is invested in their improvement.

Students, as hard as this may be, we encourage you not to shy away from a class because it has a reputation for being hard. Often the best learning happens in hard classes where a professor has high standards for success. A GPA of 3.60 rather than 3.65 is unlikely to make a major difference in your life; taking and succeeding in a difficult course will impart learning and satisfaction that counts for much more.

The Middlebury Campus

EDITOR IN CHIEF
*Maggie Reynolds **
MANAGING EDITORS
*Katie Futterman **
*Ryan McElroy **
BUSINESS DIRECTOR
Terry Luongo
EDITORIAL BOARD DIRECTOR
*Hannah Sayre **
EDITORS AT LARGE
*Charlie Keohane **
*Sarah Miller **
*Tejas Srinivasan **
NEWS DESK
*Susanna Schatz *†*
*Cole Chaudhari **
Olivia Mueller
Ellie Trinkle
LOCAL DESK
*Julia Pepper *†*
Mandy Berghela
Emily Hogan
*Katrina Schwarz **
*Ben Wagner**
OPINIONS DESK
Claire Shapiro †*
*Sophia Afsar-Keshmiri **
*Yuvraj Shah **
*Shane Silverman **
*Emily Wight**
ARTS & CULTURE DESK
*Acadia Klepeis *†*
*Catherine Goodrich**
Jack Torpey
SPORTS DESK
*Charles Crounse *†*
Lexi Linafelter
*Jack McGuire**
PHOTO DESK
Charlie Deichman-Caswell
Tom Nevins
VISUALS DESK
Skiles Roberts-Salvador
Thea Volpp
ONLINE EDITORS
Sheila Lam †
Jessica Li
Mady Lieblein
Changchang Ma
Hobie Swan
Claire Yang
LAYOUT EDITORS
Olivia Kilborn †
Caroline Harding
Emily Hogan
Adelle MacDowell
COMMUNICATIONS
Frannie Newman †
Jake Gilbert
Benji Sindell
COPY EDITORS
Stephanie Crocker
Mira Ward

**Member of Editorial Board*
† Senior Editor

The Campus reserves the right to deny publication of all or part of a submission for any reason. This includes, but is not limited to: the making of assertions based on hearsay; the relation of private conversations; the libelous mention of unverifiable events; the use of vulgar language or personal attacks; unwarranted requests for anonymity.

More information about the paper and its submission policies can be found online at www.middleburycampus.com.

The opinions expressed by contributors to the Opinions section, as well as reviews, columns, editorial comics and other commentary, are views of the individual contributors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the newspaper. The Campus welcomes letters to the editor at 250 words or less, or opinions submissions at 800 words or less.

@middleburycampus

@middcampus

The Middlebury Campus

Chekhov, please: Middlebury Community Players' "Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike"

By ACADIA KLEPEIS
Senior Arts & Culture Editor

To ring in the spring, the Middlebury Community Players (MCP) turned to "Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike," an offbeat countryside comedy by Christopher Durang. The show ran from Thursday, Feb. 29 through Sunday, March 3 at Town Hall Theater. Since its founding in 1959, MCP has typically staged between two and four performances per year.

"MCP always presents a comedy in its winter slot," wrote Peter Kristoph '76, the show's director, in an email to The Campus. "I tossed around various comedies to propose before deciding on ["Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike"], which struck me as funny yet substantive. In other words, it wasn't just a frivolous comedy — an observation boosted by the fact the play won the Best Play Tony Award in 2013 on Broadway."

"Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike" is the fourth production that Kristoph has directed for MCP. It was produced by Jon Fenner and stage managed by Tom Noble. Following open auditions in December, Kristoph cast six actors, two of whom are MCP contributing members, from a pool of 17 local auditioners.

The plot centers on a refreshingly dysfunctional family made up of three siblings in their sixties: the curmudgeonly Vanya (Kevin Commins), the narcissistic actress Masha (Annie Moore-Cox) and the perpetually disappointed Sonia (Kimberlee Moyer), their adopted sister. The trio's names are taken from Anton Chekhov's work, but regardless of familiarity with the playwright, the tension between theatrical and family drama is clear.

Acadia Klepeis / The Middlebury Campus
MCP typically presents a comedy every spring at Town Hall Theater.

Act I opens with Vanya and Sonia's morning routine — squabbling over coffee — which is interrupted when Masha arrives with her 20-something-year-old fifth husband, Spike (Kush Sharma). Old tensions (who pays the bills?) and new rivalries (who is the pretty young neighbor?) reach their peak on the evening of a costume party.

In Act II, the siblings let down their guard as the sisters fight openly, romances abruptly spark and flame out, and the group ponders changing times. When the curtain falls, the setting remains unchanged. The projected sun rose, set and rose again — all alterations occurring beneath the skin.

In many ways, the set was one of the main characters of the play. Described in the program as the "patio of a farmhouse in Bucks County, Pennsylvania," MCP's version featured an ivy-covered gazebo, cushy deck furniture and forest imagery depicted in a series of brightly colored impressionistic panels by scenic painter Jessica Danyow.

While the show's lighting and sound design were simple, letting the actors and the script stand for themselves, the performance incorporated fun and hummable songs like "Good Morning" from the musical "Singing in the Rain" and "Heigh Ho" from Walt Disney's "Snow White." The use of music dressed up the single set and provided effective transitions between scenes.

On the theme of dressing up, the costumes were highlights of the show. From Masha's entrance in a dramatic red floral dress, strappy heels and sunglasses to Sonia's turquoise turn as the evil queen à la Maggie Smith in "California Suite," costume designer Connie Carroll breathed life into each of the characters.

In particular, Sonia's personal transformation was reflected in her costuming, as she goes from a hardened homebody in slippers and a robe to a woman ready to claim her place in the world, having literally let down her hair. More abstractly, Carroll's sparkly imagining of a molecule was another standout ensemble.

Of all the strong moments of acting in the play — among them Sonia and Masha's battle to be the most pitiful crier, Vanya's Morticia-worthy deadpan and Spike's we're-laughing-at-you comic relief — Vanya's eleventh-hour monologue must be mentioned. Kristoph cited the four pages of text as one of the moments he connects with most from the script.

"I could relate to his memories of TV from the late 1950s and early 1960s, along with typewriters, Wite-out, carbon paper and dial telephones! Many audience members 'of a certain age' have come up to me after seeing the play elated to have 'gone down memory lane' with Vanya during his monologue," he wrote in an email to The Campus.

For younger attendees, however, the play's nostalgia for the '50s is a bit more complicated.

"With his vision turned towards the past, the playwright delivers through Vanya's lines a rather curious yearning — oh mankind doomed with the imminent global apocalypse, why can't we just go back to the good old times, when we can still do one thing at a time?! But the truth is, there are no 'good old times,'" attendee Caroline Jiao '24 wrote in a message to The Campus.

Even the character herself feels the need to make a disclaimer: "I'm not a conservative but I love things from the past," says Vanya.

Beyond the content of the play itself, what is most striking about the performance is the way it showcases the continued strength of community theater in the Middlebury region. Though the house wasn't full on Saturday evening, several recent MCP productions have stood out for their creative audacity, as reflected in packed seats and sold out signs. For example, in the fall of 2023, "Second Sight" offered a spooky reimagining of the lives of the Eddy Brothers complete with magic and messages from beyond the grave, while the spring 2022 production of the musical "Tuck Everlasting" captured hearts with its earnest illustration of the immortal Tuck family and their entourage.

Despite a few issues of pacing likely owing more to an untrimmed script than to the actors' delivery, "Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike" fits into the strong tradition of local theater in Middlebury.

"I hope that audiences are happy they made the effort to go out in late February/early March to be entertained by live theater and that [the show] made them laugh — and perhaps shed a tear or two," Kristoph wrote.

"There are no shared memories anymore," Vanya protests in his monologue. But what is live theater if not a shared memory?

Reflecting on Richard Burton and Julia Andrews' performance on "The Ed Sullivan Show," Vanya mourns, "it put theatre in the national consciousness, which it isn't anymore." Community theatre productions like MCP's "Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike" are challenging that idea.

WEST AFRICAN DANCE AND DRUMMING CLASS: A FIRSTHAND ACCOUNT

By NATHAN BERNAZZANI
Contributing Writer

Walking into Wilson Hall, I was a bit tentative about the new environment. This would be my first official dance class in over a year — I was excited but nervous for this experience.

As the other attendees and I settled in, the sounds of our voices and shuffling feet were soon underscored by a different kind of noise: the steady, rhythmic clapping of hands. The instructor of the class had gotten up from the circle of drummers and was making his way to the dance floor, drawing us in with the beat. As everyone slowly joined in, the volume increased, as did the energy in the room. Soon, any nervousness I had felt was drowned out by the sound of everyone clapping together in time.

Then, the drums joined us. The deep, rich bums of the djembes and doundouns filled the auditorium, resonating through the whole space, the syncopated rhythms overlapping with each other and the steady "one-two-one-two" of the dancers' clapping hands creating a cacophony of sound that transported us out of the small town of Middlebury, and into the heart of West Africa.

The West African Dance and Drum Class is a free, walk-in workshop sponsored by the college Dance Department. On Monday evenings between 5 and 6:30 p.m., college students, faculty and community members are welcome to drop in to one week of the class, or come each week for the class's duration through May 6. I attended on Feb. 26.

The class is led by Soriba "Simbo" Camara, a master teacher of traditional West African dance. Originally from Guinea, a country located on the northwest coast of Africa, Camara has an extensive background in traditional dance training beginning at the age of five. Throughout his career, Camara has been a soloist, principal dancer and choreographer at several ballet schools in Guinea. He is now based in Bristol, Vt.

Camara shares his knowledge of traditional West African music and dance by bringing his classes to the Vermont local community. This lifelong passion shines through in his instruction, as Camara enthusiastically supports and cheers on the dancers as he demonstrates each step and drums out the rhythms for attendees to follow.

"African dance and drumming is about exercise, the culture ... [and the] happiness that we bring together that brings people together," Camara said. "That is where the West African culture comes from."

This essence of community and togetherness that Camara referred to exists not just between the dancers themselves on the floor, but between the dancers and the music that moves them.

The relationship between the dance and the music is integral to learning dances from West Africa, as the tradition features a call-and-response pattern. Two of thesw, the desert next to Senegal and Mali. The dances are two different cultural experiences, based in separate parts of the country, yet Camara brings them together in the same class to give his students an impression of Guinea's range of cultural expression.

The dance moves are strong and dynamic, inviting one's feet to constantly move underneath them, stomping out the steady rhythm of the drums. Dancers go from raising their arms up to the sky as if they were reaching for the clouds, to bending down low, pliéing as they scoop their arms up from the floor.

Clapping, high knees, swinging arms and fast feet make for a fast-paced and high-energy workout. But don't be alarmed by the speed with which the dancers move – as Camara put it, the class is all about the practice.

"Take your time. You're going to watch the people and what they're doing — you're going to follow them," he said.

Courtesy Photo
Instructor Soriba "Simbo" Camara in traditional performance attire.

For anyone interested in exploring African culture, dancing, exercise or trying something completely new, the West African dance and drum class is a supportive, fun environment that radiates positivity through the beat of traditional songs and dances from Guinea.

Signed, sealed, reconsidered: "Your Sexts Are Sh*t"

By VIRGINIA FRAU
Contributiong Writer

Writer and performer Rachel Mars brought her one-woman play, "Your Sexts Are Sh*t: Older Better Letters," to Wright Memorial Theatre as a part of Middlebury's 2023-24 Performing Arts Series.

Through readings of various artists' love letters and projections of anonymous explicit digital messages, the Feb. 29 and March 1 performances served as intimate — at times overwhelmingly so — explorations of desire, the forms used to express it and the politics that dictate it.

At the top of the play, Mars entered the stage quietly, passing purposefully through a triangulated scene: in one corner was a short dresser and carousel slide projector pointing at a screen, while in another a writing desk with an open laptop on it and the show's title card cast on the black backdrop.

Stopping first at the dresser, Mars opened a drawer, pulled out a stack of envelopes, untied them and replaced all but one. She removed the letter inside, unfolded it and began to read aloud into a microphone a letter written by Irish author James Joyce to his wife, Nora Barnacle. Quickly, she sent the audience into raucous laughter with details of Joyce's acute appreciation of his wife's mid-intercourse flatulence.

Mars alternated between reading letters and clicking silently between the slides of suggestive texts — brief and unembellished in comparison to the letters, but no less dirty.

The third element of the show, performed from a slightly raised platform where Mars leaned conversationally against a desk, microphone in hand, was an original, autobiographical letter that described Mars' lifelong journey as a queer woman. In the Q&A following the show, Mars framed the letter as a way of "coming into [her] sexuality through writing."

The show's inception was indeed inspired by this first letter. "In June 2016, immediately after the Brexit vote I was depressed and in upstate New York," Mars wrote in the playbill. Trying to cheer her up and provide some comedic relief, a friend Mars read her Joyce's letter off of his phone — and it worked.

Using the Joyce letter as inspiration, Mars began conversations with sexologists Jana Funke, an associate professor of English and Sexuality Studies at the University of Exeter, and Lena Wanggren, a research fellow of English and Scottish Literature at the University of Edinburgh, about a play based on the premise of love letters.

Research for the piece began with the unveiling of love letters from creatives like Georgia O'Keefe and Radclyffe Hall, former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt and a monk named Brother Augustine, all of which ultimately appeared in the show alongside a collection of text messages from friends, colleagues and strangers.

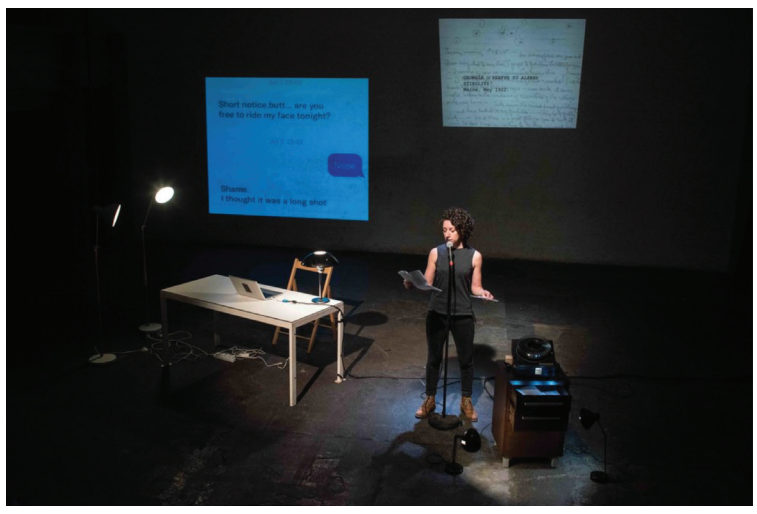
The readings were accompanied by the voices of Olivia Newton John ("Physical"), Diana Ross ("I'm Coming Out") and Janelle Monáe ("Make Me Feel"). This musical element was sometimes more distracting than conducive, however, and at points, the music was so loud that it was difficult to focus on Mars's voice at all.

Minimal but poignant set dressing made for an intimate audience experience, particularly the inclusion of floor and desk lamps to subtly illuminate the corners of the stage.

After the performance, Professor of Theater Claudio Medeiros mediated a Q&A between Mars and the audience. Mars described her creative process, saying that while some elements of the production evolved — for instance, the show was originally a three-person production — others have always been central to her thesis.

Letters from Joyce to Barnacle were consistently used throughout the play, typically followed by a transition to a slide stating, "Nora Barnacle to James Joyce, 1909," and then Mars, standing, sighing, at the microphone. She eventually explained, "We don't know what happened to Nora's letters, we couldn't find any of them. Probably the patriarchy."

At the very end of the play, the carousel returned to the slide, "Nora Barnacle to James Joyce, 1909," but this time, the spotlight on Mars dimmed and the raspy, authoritative female voice of actress Lesley Ewen came over the speakers to read an imagined response from Barnacle to her husband. The letter was enthusiastic, sensual and, at some points, plain nasty.



COURTESY PHOTO
Rachel Mars alternates between a powerpoint presentation of modern sexts and projected images from long-ago love letters.

When asked about this segment of the show, Mars explained that her intentions were mostly political — she wanted to give an empowered, explicitly consensual and indelicate voice to Barnacle, who had been, until now, silenced in the archives of her own love story.

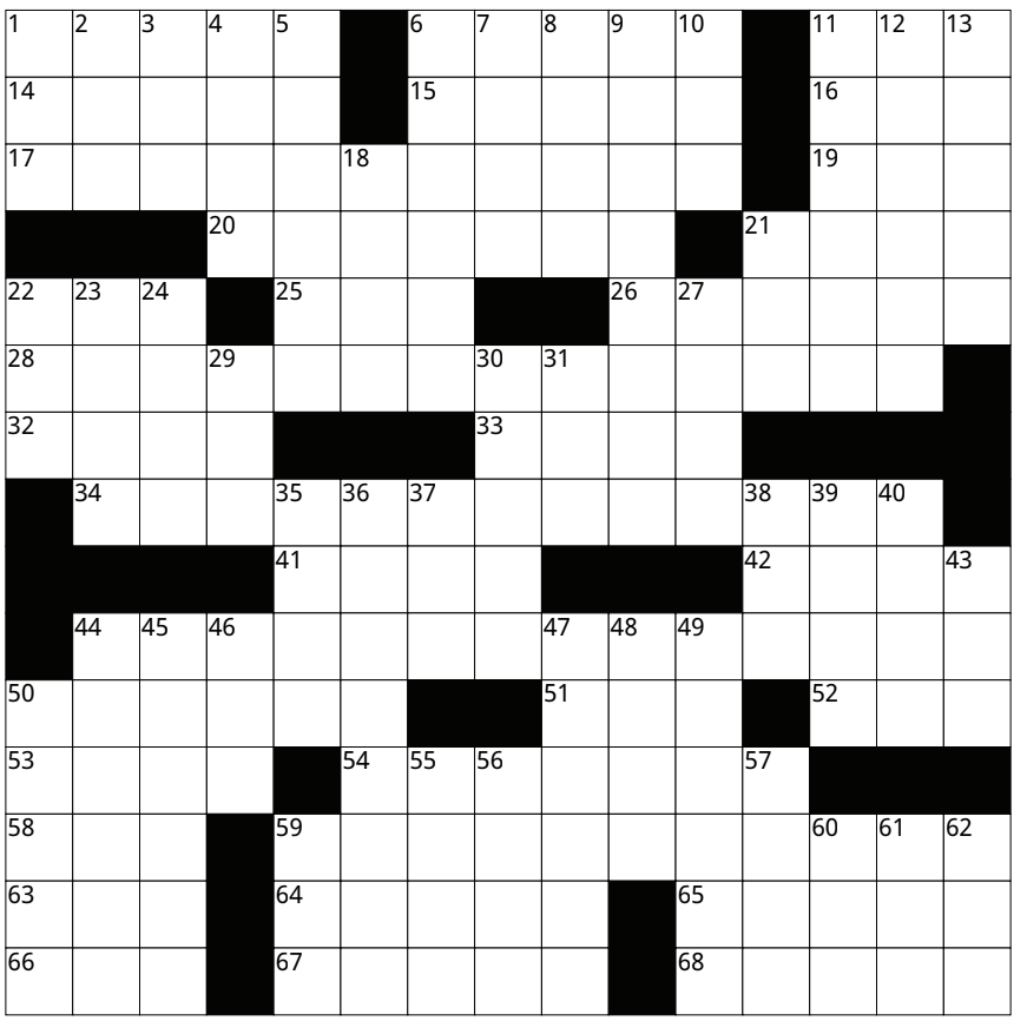
Nora's response was incredibly honest and artful, but also long and unrelenting. Mars later described this as an especially divisive aspect of the show for past audiences.

Towards the latter half of the show, the false dichotomy of the title became clear — newer, more immediate forms of expressing desire aren't necessarily worse or more crude than they used to be. As Mars put it, "It's just a matter of knowing your form." To this end, a main thesis of the performance seemed to be that intimacy isn't created by flowery language or (literally) fruity metaphors. Instead, it is sparked by knowing your partner — from their body to their handwriting to their domestic quirks — and by putting that familiarity into words.

Mars' performance became more overtly female and queer in focus over time, serving as a captivating demonstration of the restraint central to that experience, and the pleasure found when that restraint is lost. Doubly, "Your Sexts Are Sh*t: Older Better Letters," views the act of writing one's desire as a reflection of the self and, for some, a physical preservation of marginalized identity.

Walking the Red Carpet

Egan Turner



ACROSS
1 San Francisco or New York athlete
6 Satisfying scent
11 Crunch time target, for short
14 Bye bye, in Bordeaux
15 Relating to the nose
16 One of the "Impractical Jokers"
17 An abrasion on the mentum osseum
19 Three, in Turin
20 Long-term Jets head coach and "The Amazing Race" competitor
21 Rubik's invention
22 School fundraising grp.
25 "BlacKkKlansman" director Spike
26 "Right?"
28 A luxation between the femur and the tibia
32 Accomplishment
33 Vowels that precede O in a classic nursery rhyme
34 A stretched ligament in the talocrural joint
41 1982 Disney sci-fi film
42 Snakelike fishes
44 A Best Picture nominee at the 2024 Oscars, and an apt description of 17-Across, 28-Across, 34-Across, and 59-Across
50 ___ Marcus
51 ___ chi
52 Jedi from Jakku
53 Empire with the capital of Cusco
54 Many an ASL word
58 Messi or Tolstoy
59 A fracture in the carpus
63 30-Down, to a rapper
64 Less coarse
65 Feel the same way
66 Fruity drink suffix
67 Protrusions on church floor plans
68 Shredded or jacked

DOWN
1 State of 11 elements at room temperature
2 Either, to a texter
3 2023 film about shoe design
4 Close
5 Mississippi city known as the birthplace of Elvis
6 "Con te partirò" singer Bocelli
7 Risque
8 Gov. agcy. responsible for workplace safety
9 Crux
10 Aluminum nitrite, chemically
11 Clever
12 2024 Best Picture nominee notably snubbed in other categories
13 Icy rain
18 Corporate VIP
21 Wolf Blitzer's network
22 Many a Canvas submission
23 Draws
24 "Now!"
27 It may be torn after 17-Across
29 33.814 ozs.
30 Small
31 The end of Ramadan
35 Encouraging word
36 Brand responsible for the plates in Middlebury's gym
37 Nice name?
38 Reykjavik's airport code
39 Cordelia and Goneril's father
40 "Legally Blonde" lead Woods
43 Clever
44 Virgil's most famous work
45 "Bombshell" actress Kidman
46 Reddit Q&A
47 One of Middlebury's improv groups
48 A satyr's Roman counterpart
49 Connection from the mouth to the lungs
50 Nabisco wafer brand
55 Geologic spans
56 ___ ball: classic arcade game
57 "Therefore..."
59 Dance or music major degree, for short
60 Pester
61 Realize
62 "___ Lasso"

2024 Oscars: hopes and predictions for three (major) awards

By JACK TORPEY
Arts & Culture Editor

Two years ago, I wrote an article in the lead-up to the Oscars spotlighting three award categories that typically get outshined by the major awards in the press. Well, sadly, my days of sticking up for cinema's little guys are over, as this article is squarely focused on the splashiest titles on the awards season marquee: acting, directing and overall film.

2023 was a strong year for the movies, offering audiences a rich diversity of exciting, well-made films ranging from old-school sports dramas like "Air" to cutting-edge, animated adventures like "Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse." As such, it only feels right to pay the heavy-hitting actors, filmmakers and producers who drove this prosperity their due by reflecting on their fates come Oscars night.

Here are my hopes and predictions for Best Actress/Actor, Best Director and Best Picture at the 2024 Academy Awards.

Best Actress/Actor

Annette Bening embodied an aging marathon swimmer, Bradley Cooper morphed into a classical music icon and Colman Domingo honored an unsung hero of the Civil Rights Movement. But among the wealth of incredible performances turned in by Hollywood's leading men and women this past year, the two that contributed the most to their respective films' power are Lily Gladstone in "Killers of the Flower Moon" and Cillian Murphy in "Oppenheimer."

Gladstone provides the anguished heart of Martin Scorsese's true-crime drama about the 1920s murders of dozens of oil-rich Osage Native Americans in Oklahoma. Portraying Mollie Burkhart, an Osage woman whose family is slowly killed off by the sinister schemes of her husband (Leonardo DiCaprio) and other white prospectors seeking to take control of the oil, the actress movingly invests her character with a stoicism that is constantly tested by the evil being inflicted upon her. The integrity that Mollie exudes regardless of her circumstances is conveyed through the steady gaze and deep, even voice that Gladstone maintains throughout much of the film, choices that make her few overt displays of emotion — both joyous and despairing — all the more impactful.

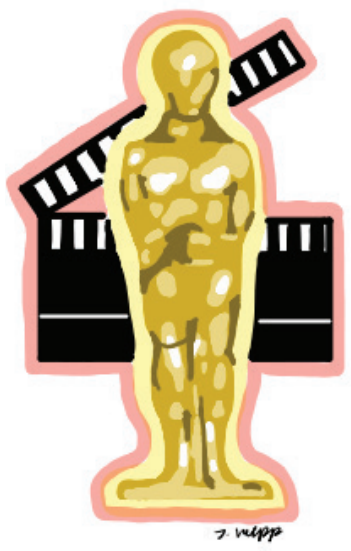
Gladstone made history as the first Native American to be nominated for the Oscar for Best Actress. Now, on the merit of how effectively she guides the audience of "Killers of the Flower Moon" through the Osage experience of one of the darkest chapters in the people's history, Gladstone deserves to make history again by winning it.

Her actor counterpart comes in the form of a haggard Murphy playing the titular role in Christopher Nolan's "Oppenheimer," the other big-name, three-hour-long historical epic of the year. Murphy is wholeheartedly captivating as the American theoretical physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer, drawing the energy of every scene into himself as collapsed stars suck in all surrounding light as posited by the scientist's 1939 theory of black holes. It is not with grand gestures or emotional outbursts that Murphy exerts this gravitational pull on the drama, however. Rather, the Irish actor accurately portrays the introspective yet charismatic "father of the atomic bomb" with calm intensity defined by measured deliveries of dialogue and a haunted thousand-yard stare, creating a mystique about the man that leaves the audience leaning in to pierce the machinery behind the blue eyes.

He may not be the frontrunner in the Best Actor race — that spot deservedly belongs to Paul Giamatti for his endearing performance in "The Holdovers" — but Murphy is the foundation of what was the year's most critically acclaimed blockbuster. For that, and for giving his strongest performance in a career full of great ones, Murphy has earned the Oscar.

My hope: Lily Gladstone, "Killers of the Flower Moon"; Cillian Murphy, "Oppenheimer"

My prediction: Lily Gladstone, "Killers of the Flower Moon"; Paul Giamatti, "The Holdovers"



Best Director

After leading the pack of twenty-first-century Hollywood filmmakers for over two decades, it looks like the path is finally clear for Christopher Nolan to win his first Academy Award for directing. The degree of difficulty that Nolan faced in bringing his vision for "Oppenheimer" to the big screen was extremely high, requiring the writer-director to amass and orchestrate a sprawling ensemble of A-list stars, oversee a production that was largely filmed in the spartan expanses of New Mexico and, most notably, recreate the detonation of an atomic bomb primarily using practical effects. The fact that he accomplished these logistical and technical feats is impressive on its own, but when Nolan's behind-the-scenes efforts are placed in the context of the finished film that he presented to audiences this past summer, the real achievement that is his direction of "Oppenheimer" reveals itself.

Boasting a three-hour running time chock-full of scientists and politicians engaged in high-level conversations, the historical drama is a supremely entertaining film that rushes along with more urgency than most thrillers, thanks to Nolan's unique command of narrative intensity. This blending of substantial subject matter and multiplex flair is a brilliant balance that Nolan has struck across many genres throughout his career. With "Oppenheimer," he has brought it to bear on the biopic and practically reinvented the form.

Martin Scorsese may play spoiler with his late-career opus "Killers of the Flower Moon," but if the Critics' Choice Awards and countless other Oscars precursors are any indication, Nolan appears to have rightly locked up the golden statuette before the envelope is even opened.

My hope: Christopher Nolan, "Oppenheimer"

My prediction: Christopher Nolan, "Oppenheimer"

Best Picture

Call it the boring choice, but there would be no more fitting commemoration of the cinematic year of 2023 than "Oppenheimer" taking home the top prize on Hollywood's biggest night. The film's impact on popular culture has seemingly been felt by everyone with access to a movie theater or the internet, a byproduct of its meme-driven symbiosis with a certain pink-themed satire and the unprecedented one-two punch that ensued at the box office. Strip "Oppenheimer" of its bountiful cultural currency, however, and what remains is still a gripping, masterfully constructed retelling of history that thrives off the career-best work of the artists who created it.

Cinematographer Hoyte van Hoytema wields the maximal resolution and scale of the IMAX film format to render richly colored, enveloping images of landscapes and human faces alike, while editor Jennifer Lame cuts the photography at a kinetic pace that lends scenes of drama the dynamism of an action sequence. Composer Ludwig Göransson contributes an explosive score of runaway strings and resounding horns that complements sound designer Richard King's visceral soundscape of pulsating atoms and rumbling fireballs. And of course, all of this craftsmanship is in service of Murphy and the impeccable cast's dramatization of Nolan's enthralling screenplay, which immerses the audience in the thrills and quandaries of the man behind one of the most consequential developments in human history.

Like in the directing category, "Killers of the Flower Moon" has a chance to pull off an upset victory in the Best Picture competition for its eloquent memorialization of a widely unknown American tragedy. That said, no 2023 film capitalized on the jackpot combination of artistic excellence, commercial attractiveness and vital, challenging storytelling better than "Oppenheimer." It's an instant classic, and husband-and-wife producers Nolan and Emma Thomas should win the Academy Award for bringing it to the world.

My hope: Christopher Nolan, Emma Thomas and Charles Roven, "Oppenheimer"

My prediction: Christopher Nolan, Emma Thomas and Charles Roven, "Oppenheimer"

Tune in to see who wins when the Oscars air on March 10 at 7 p.m.

Lights, camera, improv: a glimpse into Middlebury's improv comedy scene

By CHARLIE KEOHANE
Editor at Large

If you're searching for a laugh, look no further than improv comedy. Middlebrow and Otter Nonsense (Otters) are Middlebury's two improv groups, each with their own comedic style and format.

Otters president Joey Disorbo '25.5 had never done improv before coming to Middlebury and auditioned for Otters on a whim.

"It's something you don't know you can do until you try it. I didn't have any real pull to do it. I thought, 'I want to try this,'" Disorbo said.

Like Disorbo, Middlebrow treasurer Per Alexander '24.5 had no improv experience before coming to Middlebury. Entering as a Feb, Alexander remembered being excited to join a new activity on campus.

Otters generally practice three times a week. Rehearsals consist of warm-up games and practicing the type of format they use in their shows. Otters typically do long-form comedy shows, meaning that the entire show follows one narrative — "like a play," Disorbo described.

"The scenes are linked to each other, there are continuing narratives, recurring characters and locations," Disorbo said. "I really like this form. A lot of the humor in a form like this is when we bring things back."

Disorbo said that with longer-form comedy, all group members must be dialed into the scene and ready to create a cohesive story.

"I think it takes longer focus. You get to create a world," Disorbo said. "You really have to pay attention for the entire time. If you miss a detail and you come in later and say the wrong thing, then there's an inconsistency. I find it more rewarding to have it pay off like three scenes later when you bring this thing back."

Middlebrow centers more on short-form comedy than Otters. Members rotate through different scenes independently of each other instead of adhering to a cohesive narrative. Middlebrow rehearses twice a week, practicing different activities and checking in at the end to reflect.

"One thing that is really nice [about short-form comedy] is that you're never stuck with a bad idea," Alexander explained. "Like if something isn't working, you can get out of it super fast. The flip side is that you have to constantly be coming up with new really different ideas. Especially when you're creating a new scene from nothing, it's hard. Sometimes, it's hard to figure out totally different things to do."

Alexander, who joined Middlebrow in spring 2021, noted how the group's comedy style has changed over time with the introduction of new members.

"In terms of our comedy style, culturally, it's been getting more risky in past years. When I joined, it was very goofy. I think it's still definitely very goofy, but it's getting more relaxed," Alexander said.

Both Middlebrow and Otters value group chemistry and spending quality time together.

"It's fun to just hang out and joke around with people as an activity that's a structured thing," said Middlebrow President Jake Huggins '24. "The performances are really fun, especially when they go well. It feels really good."

According to Disorbo, building trust in practices is important to maintaining composure on stage. Additionally, different group members bring in fresh perspectives and material.

"Something I really value about the Otters is that everybody in the group kind of has their own thing going on outside of improv," Disorbo said. "We come together from our different areas in life to come together to do this. I think that's really valuable because we can all bring fresh stuff."

Otters also do joint shows with improv groups from other schools, including Harvard University and Skidmore College.

"It's a great way to see what else is happening," Disorbo said. "Where are we relative to the other groups, what can we learn from them because everyone's got different little practices. It's always fun to be in front of a new crowd."

Some of Alexander's favorite Middlebrow memories are simply the funny bits he remembers from the years of rehearsal.

"I've met so many people that I wouldn't have met otherwise," he said. "It's very fun. I'm glad I stuck with it."

Huggins described Middlebrow's atmosphere as welcoming. "Whenever we get new people, we try and make them feel confident in their ability to do improv," Huggins said.

He added that the group works together not to revert back to common tropes. "A lot of people, myself included, have things we fall back on, and we have to try and get people to break those habits in a supportive way."

COURTESY PHOTO / @OTTERNONSENSEPLAYERS
Middlebrow and Otters hosted a joint show to start off spring semester.

Alexander also described how rewarding it has been to make progress in his improv skills. "I feel like I've improved a lot, which is cool because I thought originally you're good or you're bad it's just how innately funny you are. But I think you can improve, practicing it every week, you get a lot better and get a much better sense of what works and what doesn't work," he said.

Ultimately, Disorbo encourages everyone to try improv comedy.

"It's not as hard as people think it is," he said. "I think that it seems really difficult and scary, and in a way, it is scary because you are going up on stage, but the reason it's not as hard is because you have people there with you. I think everyone should try it once."

WOMEN'S HOCKEY WINS NESCAC CHAMPIONSHIP, ADVANCES TO NCAA TOURNAMENT

By JONATHAN BUCHHOLZ
Contributing Writer

COURTESY PHOTO

The women's hockey team celebrated the program's 12th NESCAC title, making them the most successful team in conference history.

On Saturday, March 2, the Middlebury women's hockey team bested Hamilton College in a stunning 4–0 shutout to win the NESCAC Tournament. While the margin of victory came as a surprise, the lockdown defense the team played was but another example of the way they have played all season.

After finding the net just 11 times in the six games leading up to the NESCAC tournament, the team looked reinvigorated this past weekend, scoring 11 goals over the course of their three games to secure the NESCAC championship.

In an interview with The Campus, forward Delanie Goniwiecha '23.5 explained that emphasizing the idea that anyone can be a goal scorer turned the team's fortunes around.

"I think having that goal-scorers mindset definitely in the second half of the season was big for us and going forward for playoffs," she said.

Although Hamilton outshot Middlebury 25–17, the Panthers outplayed the Continentals on both ends of the ice. First, their scoring mentality meant that Middlebury was better able to convert shots into goals. Hamilton failed to convert their many chances while Middlebury scored on almost a quarter of their shots. Second, stalwart goalkeeping by Sophia Will '26 ensured a shutout, registering 25 saves to the Hamilton goalkeepers' 13.

Equally important to how many goals the Panthers have scored has been when they have scored. In the team's semifinal matchup against Colby College, all three of Middlebury's goals were scored in the last minute of a period. Audrey Lazar '23.5 told The Campus that this built crucial momentum for the rest of the game.

"I think for us that's a big thing, just that final push and crossing the line, as our coach always says, to bury those pucks when we need to and build off of each period," Lazar said.

In the championship game, the Panthers struck first when Cat Appleyard '24.5 found the net with just 29 seconds to go in the first period. Callia Ferraris '27 extended their lead late in the second period and one-timed a pass, sneaking the puck past the Hamilton goalie during a power play. Just 35 seconds later, Kylie Quinlan '24.5 capitalized on the Panther's momentum with a goal of her own. Raia Schluter '25 added the team's fourth and final goal in the third period to clinch the victory.

Winning is not new for the Panthers; with their 12th NESCAC championship victory, the team solidified their place as the winningest team in division history. In the 2021–2022 season, they maintained a remarkable 27–0 record that culminated in an NCAA championship win.

The team's mentality remains unchanged: Julia Johnson '23.5 credited a lot of Middlebury's success to being singularly focused on their current game and not thinking ahead.

"Even though we were undefeated [in the 2021–2022 season], which was obviously super cool, something we tried to focus on was 'just one game at a time' and focusing on the [game] that's ahead of you," Johnson said. "A team saying we have this year is 'be where your feet are.'"

Not only did concentration play a key role in the Panthers' success, but so did team chemistry. "I feel like, at least for me, this was the most cohesive team that we've had, which was really great," Johnson added. "I feel like there was no grade hierarchy or anything like that."

This lack of grade hierarchy proved key in creating more opportunities for the underclassmen of the team, as Avery McInerny '26 and Ferraris both garnered all conference honors.

Winning the 2024 NESCAC tournament has earned the team an automatic bid to the NCAA DIII championship. If they can maintain their current form, the Panthers might just be coming home with the latest addition to their extensive trophy cabinet.

SPRING SPORTS PREVIEWS

By CHARLES CROUNSE, LEXI LINAFELTER & JACK McGUIRE
Senior Sports Editor & Sports Editors

The snow is melting, the ice is thawing and students are busily hurrying to and from midterms. Spring has arrived at Middlebury, and with it comes the return of Middlebury's spring sports teams. In this edition of team previews, we take a look at all the Panthers in action this spring — athletes to watch, results to expect and games you can't miss — to provide fans with a comprehensive viewer's guide to Middlebury athletics this season.

COURTESY PHOTO

Michelle Louie '24 is a captain and key runner for the women's track and field team this spring.

Women's Tennis

Head Coach: Taka Bertrand
Captains: Kavina Amin '24, Amy Delman '24, Gena Huang '24
Athletes to Watch: Sahana Raman '25, Ananya Annapantula '27, Anna Lardner '26
Key Competitions: Tufts University (home, March 10), Wesleyan University (away, April 14), Hamilton College (home, April 20)

The women's tennis team came agonizingly close to a NESCAC title last spring, and this year there is no doubt they are eyeing the top of the podium. Last spring's core group of players remains intact, and with several of their strongest players now in their prime years as experienced collegiate athletes, the Panthers are poised to have a real shot at the title. It also certainly won't hurt that last year's champion Wesleyan lost their top player Nika Vesely, who transferred to the University of Chicago. Meanwhile, the Panthers boast a strong returning lineup, with Raman and Delman forming a formidable doubles pair that reached the Intercollegiate Tennis Association (ITA) Cup quarterfinals in the fall. Add in the strong doubles pair of Annapantula and Nina Farhat '25 and the individual brilliance of Lardner, who earned a 9–1 record in the fall, and the Panthers have a roster more than capable of capturing the team's first ever NESCAC win.

Men's Tennis

Head Coach: Andrew Thomson '10
Captains: Noah Laber '24, Andrew Mueller '24, Robby Ward '24, Joe Mairs '24, Maximus Kim '24, Aidan Harris '24, Neel Epstein '25
Athletes to Watch: Julian Wu '26, Laber, Harris
Key Competitions: Tufts (home, March 10), Williams College (home, March 30), Bowdoin College (home, April 27)

Likewise, the men's tennis team is also gearing up for a NESCAC title tilt. The team upset Bowdoin to claim their third league victory in four years last April, and they'll be looking to repeat the feat. Returning all but one senior from last year's team, the team will be significantly bolstered by the return of Ward, Mueller and Harris, who all took the fall semester off, and Laber, who returns from injury. They rejoin an already talented roster of younger players, which includes ITA Cup singles semi-finalist Wu. After falling to Case Western Reserve University in last year's national semifinal, the team will also have one eye on the road after NESCACs as they look to capture the team's fourth national title. It's still too early to say whether the Panthers can meet their lofty ambitions, but with two storming victories this past weekend, there is no obvious reason why not.

Women's Track and Field

Head Coach: Martin Beatty '84
Captains: Tatum Peskin '24, Meaghan McEnroe '24.5, Michelle Louie '24, Ciara Dale '24
Athletes to Watch: Emily Rubio '26, Audrey MacLean '27, Zoe Wang '25
Key Competitions: Amherst Spring Fling (April 6), Middlebury Invitational (home, April 20), NESCAC Championship (away, April 27)

The women's track and field team is another NESCAC-defending champion, making their goal rather straightforward: retain the title. While it won't be easy going in a stacked division, the Panthers possess one of the most well-rounded teams in the northeast and can rely on talented athletes across distance, sprints, throws and jumps. Rubio is already a school record holder for outdoor track in the heptathlon, while both Wang and Mary Scott Robinson '24 set indoor records in the pole vault and weight throw, respectively. The team is particularly strong in the 400m, with their 4x400 team of Louie, Anna Krouse '25.5, Mary Elliot '26 and Lily Bulczynski '26 holding the sixth fastest adjusted time in Division III. Macy Daggitt '25 remains one of the best jumpers in the region, while cross-country standout MacLean continues to rank highly in distance events. Expect the Panthers to be battling it out with teams like Amherst and Williams for the NESCAC title come April, and don't be surprised if they come out on top.

Men's Track and Field

Head Coach: Martin Beatty
Captains: Peter Burke '24, Colin Breen '24, Sam Maxwell '24, Joel Kofman '24
Athletes to Watch: Alec Gironda '24, Marco Motroni '25, Dave Filias '25, Caleb Smith '27
Key Competitions: Amherst Spring Fling (April 6), Middlebury Invitational (home, April 20), NESCAC Championship (away, April 27)

The Panthers were a competitive fourth place in last year's NESCAC meet, and they'll be hoping to claw their way onto the podium. It's certainly a possibility, too, with a promising new group of first years ready to make their mark on the Allan Dragone Track. Caleb Smith leads the way for this young cohort after his impressive win in the heptathlon at the Tufts National Qualifying Meet, while Aiden Tam '27 and Ray Pavlik '27 are also ones to watch in hurdles and middle distance respectively. Smith and Motroni both recently set school records in indoor track in the heptathlon and 60m sprint, while Filias earned several podium finishes across the season in the throwing events. Gironda will lead the distance contingent, which also features Benjamin Hughes '27 and Zach Utz '26. The NESCAC looks extra strong this year, but if the Panthers find their stride at the right time, they could be one of the league's top teams this spring.

Women's Golf

Head Coach: Tim Walko
Captains: Sophia Hwang '24, Jacqueline Slinkard '24
Athletes to Watch: Morgan Lee '26, Mia Politano '25, Audrey Tir '25
Key Competitions: Cortland Martin / Wallace Invitational (away, April 13–14), Jack Leaman Invitational (away, April 20–21), NESCAC Championships (away, May 4–5)

The women's golf team is looking to build upon their success from this past season fall. The team consistently outpaced the rest of the NESCAC, coming in first place at two of the team's four regular season tournaments. At the Hamilton Fall Invitational, the Panthers won as a team, and Tir earned Medalist Honors after finishing one-over-par for the tournament. The Panthers continued to have great individual performances as Ella Han '27 earned Medalist Honors at the Wesleyan Invitational. However, the team's great regular season performances did not directly translate to the NESCAC Championships Qualifier, where the team came in fourth place out of the eight teams competing. While the performance did qualify the team for NESCAC Championships in the spring, Middlebury's roster this year is good enough to top the rest of the NESCAC and win a championship.

Men's Golf

Head Coach: Justin Kumpulanian
Captains: Paul Fine-Lease '25, Colin McCaigue '24
Athletes to Watch: Charlie Schulman '26, Ben Burns '25, Derek Ban '24
Key Competitions: Bill Detrick Invitational (away, April 6–7), Williams Spring Invitational (away, April 20–21), NESCAC Championships (away, April 27–28)

After winning the NESCAC Championship last season, the men's golf team is looking to repeat their success in what will be Kumpulanian's first season as head coach. McCaigue and Schulman should hopefully lead the way for the team. Both golfers are the only returning members of the team who competed at last year's NESCAC Championships and will look to build on their past success. In the fall, the team placed around the middle of the pack in most of their tournaments, but, notably, Schulman earned Medalist Honors at the Ekwanok Sap Bucket Challenge. The team also saw Julian Galindo Macias '27 and Trevor Stachecki '27 get opportunities to play in the fall, and the two first years look to be part of a promising young core for the team.

Softball

Head Coach: Kelly Bevere
Athletes to Watch: Kristyn Carroll '26, McKenna Lont '26, Jewel Ashbrook '24
Key Competitions: Wesleyan (home, March 30), Tufts (away, April 14), Hamilton (home, May 4)

The softball team is looking to build on their strong 2023 campaign. Last year, the team went 18–17, but lost to Tufts in the NESCAC Quarterfinals in extra innings. The team hopes to not repeat last year's heartbreaking loss as they bring back a crop of talented young players. On the offensive side, Carroll looks to lead the way for the Panthers. Carroll had a 1.240 OPS last season, which placed her second in the NESCAC, slugged four home runs and had 30 RBIs. In addition to Carroll, Megan Fox '24 should help lengthen the Panthers' lineup. In regards to pitching, Middlebury's top two pitchers will look to build on their success from last season. Ashbrook pitched to a 2.96 ERA across 80 and a third innings last year, and Lont had 3.38 ERA in her 70 and a third innings pitched.

Women's Lacrosse

Head Coach: Kate Livesay '03
Captains: Chloe Newman '24, Susan Rowley '24
Players to watch: Newman, Hope Shue '25, Maggie Coughlin '24.5, Kylie Wilson '25, Caroline Adams '26
Key Competitions: Franklin and Marshall College (away, March 19), The College of New Jersey (away, March 21), Tufts University (away, April 13)

Middlebury is the team to beat in Division III women's lacrosse, coming off of their third-straight NCAA Championship and perfect 23–0 record last spring. After a powerful opening weekend against Amherst (16–5) and Babson (18–5) on March 2 and March 3 respectively, the team shows no signs of slowing down.

Shue is the reigning NCAA Tournament's Most Outstanding Player, receiving First-Team All-American and All-Region honors, as well as an All-NESCAC First-Team Selection last season. Opposing defenses are certainly on the lookout for Shue, but are ill-prepared to face the threat of Coughlin and Adams by her side. Coughlin was a second-team All-Region honoree last season, finished third on the team in points (55) and confidently put up three goals on opening weekend.

As a younger talent on the team, Adams was named to the NCAA All-Tournament team in 2023 and has already established dominance in draw controls. Against Amherst, Adams scored four goals off of a comfortably executed right-footed split dodge that left the Mammoth defense in the dust. On the other side of the field, Newman was a staple of last year's defensive might — she finished third on the team in caused turnovers (22) and is well-positioned to lead the defense this season. Despite graduating record-breaking players from last year's team, the tradition of Middlebury lacrosse is strong and returners appear ready to carry the torch into another season of success.

Men's Lacrosse

Head Coach: Dave Campbell '00
Captains: Luke Simpson '24, William Ryan '24, Tom Conley '24
Players to watch: Conley, Cooper Demallie '26, Russell Thorndike '25, Billy Curtis '25
Key Competitions: Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (home, March 6), Bowdoin College (away, March 9), Tufts (home, April 14)

Men's lacrosse launched the season with a 17–11 win against Amherst at home on Saturday, March 1, checking off step one in surpassing last year's impressive 18–3 finish. Coming off a conference second place and NCAA quarterfinal appearance, the Panthers are returning several key players. The biggest questions face the defense; Simpson is out for the season with a broken collarbone and despite a solid defensive performance to start the season, it remains uncertain who will step up in the back of the field. Luckily, returning stars Conley, Thorndike and Curtis are set to lead a high-powered offense heading into this season, boasting a majority of last season's starters and showing promising signs from younger players.

Conley received an All-American honorable mention, as well as All-Region and All-NESCAC honors last season, and looked confident in the midfield against Amherst. Thorndike was second-team All-NESCAC in 2023 and put up four goals in the season opener. With one goal and three assists this weekend, Curtis is set to ascend on the program's all-time leaderboard in career assists, on which he currently sits in third (43). Eyes will also be on Cooper DeMallie, who scored three goals this weekend — since receiving recognition as USA Lacrosse D3 player of the week last April, DeMallie led Team USA to gold in the International Indoor Junior Lacrosse Championships this summer. Facing conference play and critical non-NESCAC matchups from the start, the Panthers are poised for another season of strength in the conference and have their sights set on a title.

Baseball

Head Coach: Mike Leonard
Captains: Mitchell Schroeder MIIS '24, Chris Borter '24, Beau Root '24
Players to watch: Kyle McCausland '25, Owen Tross '26, Root, Schroeder
Key competitions: Endicott College (away, March 17), Johns Hopkins University (away, March 22), Wesleyan University (away, April 27)

Middlebury Baseball closed the 2023 season with a 27–13 record that marks the second most wins in program history, second place in the conference and an appearance in the regional round of the NCAA tournament. Fans hope to see this momentum carry into this season, which kicked off on March 1 in Montgomery, Ala. with a win against Edgewood College (12–9) and two losses against Millsaps College (1–11) and Huntingdon College (9–10).

Despite graduating several heavy hitters, the Panthers return a formidable roster. Without a doubt, all eyes will be on McCausland this season, the reigning NESCAC Player of the Year with four program records in hand. The Third Team All-American, First Team All-Region and All-NESCAC honoree leads the Panther leaderboard in single-season hits (66), single-season RBI (60), single-season at-bat (154) and single-game RBI (9). He also led the NESCAC conference in batting average (.438) and tied for top of the conference for home runs on the season (11) last season. Schroeder and Root also bring strength at-bat, hitting .337 and .364 last season, respectively.

From the mound, Tross is drawing attention on the defensive side, threatening 95 mile per hour pitches that transcend the typical in DIII baseball. On a revenge tour for the conference title this time around, baseball's spring schedule will demand clutch performances in conference and non-conference matchups. However, Middlebury looks ready to step on the brand-new turf at Forbes Field and fight for another successful season.